Prodelo
Fano

SERMONS BY NOTED MINISTERS OF THE NORTHERN HIGHLANDS.

SERMONS

BY

Noted Ministers of the Northern Highlands

Edited, with Biographical Notes,

BY

The Rev. D. BEATON, Wick,

Author of "Some Noted Ministers of the Northern Highlands," &c.

Inverness

PRINTED BY THE NORTHERN COUNTIES NEWSPAPER AND PRINTING AND PUBLISHING COMPANY, LIMITED

1930

PREFACE.

THE following collection of sermons by noted ministers of the Northern Highlands is published as a companion volume to *Some Noted Ministers of the Northern Highlands*, published at the end of last year. Unfortunately some of the most outstanding of the ministers of the Northern Highlands left none of their sermons in print or MS. Others left much material to select from. In selecting these sermons I had a difficulty in making a choice where there was a number of sermons to select from, and readers familiar with the sermons of these worthy men may differ as to whether the selection is the best that could have been made. Be that as it may, I have endeavoured to bring together in one volume a number of sermons which will be highly valued by those who love the truths that moved the hearts of thousands who heard them as the gospel of their salvation. It is with wistful feelings we read these noble pulpit utterances from lips that were touched with a live coal from off the altar, and which ring so true to the Scriptures. Gone are the noble messengers that proclaimed the message—gone are the gracious men and women who drank it in, and in doing so forgot all their sorrows. We believe there is still some who value the gospel as

set forth in these sermons, and we trust all such will give a welcome to this book and make it known to their friends. Books of this kind have but a limited circulation, and those who see them through the press often get very little encouragement for their labour. The volume is sent forth with the prayer that the Holy Spirit may use these sermons as in the days of old for the edification of His people and for the conversion of sinners.

D. BEATON.

WICK, *8th April*, 1930.

CONTENTS.

PAGE.

No Condemnation (Romans i. 1). By the Rev. James Fraser, Alness 1

Great and Precious Promises (2 Peter i. 4). By the Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie, Lochcarron 15

The Liberal Devising Liberal Things (Isaiah xxxii. 8). By the Rev. Alexander Fraser, D.D., Kirkhill . . 40

Christ Lifted Up (John xii. 32). By the Rev. Charles Calder, Ferintosh 69

The Everlasting Covenant (2 Samuel xxiii. 5). By the Rev. Alexander Stewart, D.D., Dingwall . . . 89

The Divine Physician (Matthew ix. 12). By the Rev. Alexander Gunn, Watten 106

The Righteousness of God Without the Law (Romans iii. 21). By the Rev. John Macdonald, D.D., Ferintosh . 131

Man's Redemption the Joy of Angels (1 Peter i. 12). By the Rev. Alexander Stewart, Cromarty . . . 150

Casting Our Burden on the Lord (Psalm lv. 22). By the Rev. Alexander Macleod, Rogart 176

Through the Wilderness to the City (Psalm cvii. 7). By the Rev. Charles C. Mackintosh, D.D., Tain . 199

Walking in the Light (1 John i. 7). By the Rev. Finlay Cook, Reay 221

Disclosures to God's People at the Great Day (2 Timothy iv. 8). By the Rev. Archibald Cook 234

The White-Robed Multitude (Revelation vii. 13). By the Rev. John Kennedy, D.D., Dingwall . . . 251

Sermons by Noted Ministers of the Northern Highlands.

No Condemnation

BY THE

Rev. JAMES FRASER of Pitcalzean, Alness.*

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."—*Romans i. 1.*

This proposition is introduced in way of inference, expressed by the word therefore. Without mentioning the different views that interpreters have had of this, I take it to be an inference from the Apostle's whole discourse and doctrine in the preceding part of this epistle. He had treated largely of the justification of sinners by grace through faith in the first five chapters. A proper inference from that is this: There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. In

* The Rev. James Fraser, Laird of Pitcalzean, was the son of the Covenanter minister, Rev. John Fraser, latterly of Alness. Mr Fraser, as the above sermon will show, was accustomed to give substantial spiritual food to his hearers. One of his sermons on Hebrews ix. 14 occupies no less than fifty-two printed pages. The Gaelic-speaking people spoke of it as "an t-searmon mòr" (the great sermon). Principal Cunningham, of the New College, Edinburgh, said the sermon was uncommonly good, but what astonished him was where a congregation could be found to follow it and appreciate it. The

the sixth and seventh chapters he had treated of what concerns sanctification. He had represented persons under the law as being in the flesh, under the dominion of sin and its servants; but persons brought under grace by free justification, as being made free from that servitude—as being become the servants of God, and having their fruit unto holiness. From his doctrine in this part, which he insists on to the end of chapter vii., he had proper occasion to add, as the mark of persons in Christ, justified and free from condemnation, that they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. It is not their so walking that frees them from condemnation, but being by gratuitous justification freed from condemnation, and brought under grace, and thereby made free from the dominion of sin (chapter vi. 14), they will, in their ordinary course, walk as is here said; and that so certainly, that if any do not so walk, but walk after the flesh, it may be justly concluded, that they are not truly in Christ as to their real spiritual state. This is the view that the Apostle's discourse directs us to take of the matter. After making the complex inference (verse 1) from his doctrine of justification and sanctification, the apostle doth, through this whole eighth chapter, discourse in the mixed way, with an eye to

only explanation is that in those days there were theological giants not only in the pulpit but also in the pew. A few of Mr Fraser's sermons were printed (see "Some Noted Ministers of the Northern Highlands," p. 47). As an author, he is chiefly known by his able work, "A Treatise on Sanctification." It is believed that this work was delivered as a series of expository sermons from the pulpit. For this reason we have taken the above from it as a specimen of Highland expository preaching in the 18th century. Mr Fraser was minister of Alness from 1726 to 1769.

both subjects, and concerning the consolation, and the obligation to duty and holy living arising from both, according to the inseparable connection that is established between them in the economy of salvation. So that, if we look through this whole eighth chapter, it is a discourse that hath this first verse, in both parts of it, for its text.

If, in all the seventeen or eighteen verses immediately preceding, he had been describing the case only of persons unregenerate—the slaves of sin, one might readily think that the inference in our text comes in somewhat awkwardly, and not in its proper place. But if, from the fourteenth verse of the preceding chapter, the case of a person is represented who walked not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, which is the truth of the matter, then the comfortable inference and description in this text are very properly introduced.

Let us now look more closely to the particular expressions of the text. Them which are in Christ Jesus, some have rendered or interpreted thus: Them who are Christians. So Castalio and Le Clerc, as is observed by Dr Whitby, who adds—"But if either of them mean only Christians by profession, or being only members of the Christian Church, this will by no means agree with this place, or any other of the like nature; since freedom from condemnation, and other benefits conferred upon us through Jesus Christ, will not follow our being Christians in this sense, but upon a lively faith in Christ, our union to Him by the Spirit," etc. Le Clerc says, that being in Christ is often used by St Paul for being a Christian. I do not observe instances of his using the expression in that lax and large sense, but quite the contrary. For which see 1 Cor. i. 30,

2 Cor. v. 17, Thess. iv. 16, and to these places of Paul we may add 1 John v. 20, Rev. xiv. 13, John xv. 5, and the words of Paul, Phil. iii. 9. In which places it is plain, that being in Christ means not only being Christians by profession and outward church privilege; but being sincere believers, in real union with Christ, and in consequence thereof, being holy in life, happy and blessed in death.

As to the second clause—who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit—the reading in the Greek, and in our translation, is vindicated by Dr Whitby in his *Examen Millii*. This way of walking, as to the ordinary course of life, is a certain consequence of being in Christ. For (2 Cor. v. 17), If any man be *in* Christ, he is a new creature; and (1 Cor. i. 30) to them who are *in* Christ Jesus, He is made wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification.

Some interpret and object thus: Mention is here made of walking after the flesh; which is certainly expressive of the case represented in the context immediately preceding, in which the man speaks so strongly of the flesh in him, and the law in his members captivating him. So some. But, if we consider the matter, we shall find that this is far from being the case in the apostle's view. There is indeed a man represented complaining bitterly of the flesh, and the law in his members, and of its force and too great prevalence. I cannot but wonder that any should take such a sense of things, and such a complaint, as proof of a man's walking after the flesh. A man may come under such consequences of an ill life with respect to his person outwardly, or his affairs, that may set him a complaining bitterly of his prevailing lusts and ill practice, when it

is not sin that is truly bitter to him, but these outward ill consequences of it; but in the preceding context we find a man feeling painfully, and lamenting bitterly the motions, force, and prevalence of sin within him, in opposition to the spiritual and holy law of God, without mentioning any ill consequence externally. Sin, and sinful affections, and their motions within him, are what he would not, and what he hates, abstracting from all penal and ill consequences. If sin remains in him, we see him in conflict with it. This doth not suit the notion of walking after the flesh. Walking imports a man's habitual and deliberate course, in which he freely proceeds, without force, struggle, or constraint, neither violently drawn, carried, or captivated; but going according to the motion and inclination of his own will. If the flesh hath its law or commandment, it may be said of the unregenerate man, with respect to the commandment of that law, as is said of Ephraim, with respect to a particular instance of fleshly walking (idolatry, Gal. v. 20), and the law requiring it (Hos. v. 11), that he walked willingly after the commandment. So the unregenerate man doth with regard to the commandment of the law of sin, as to the habitual and prevailing inclination of his will, whatever check conscience may give. If this is, as it certainly is, walking after the flesh, the preceding context represents a man whose character, disposition, purpose, and earnest endeavour are very contrary to it. I here add a passage of Dr Davenant (afterwards Bishop of Sarum) on Col. i. 7: "The regenerate may fall into sin; but they are not wont to walk, nor can they live in sin. For he walketh in sin who sinneth by his hearty choice, in his constant course, and with the full consent of his will."

The mention of the Spirit has here been the occasion of another argument, respecting the meaning of the immediately preceding context. On occasion of speaking on the subject of holiness, the Apostle very commonly mentions and brings into view the Spirit of God, with His powerful operation and influence: and the mutual opposition is commonly stated between the Spirit and the flesh. But there is no mention of the Spirit in the case proposed in the latter part of chapter vii. as there is here; which, according to them, gives cause to think, that it is here only (chapter viii. 1) that the Apostle begins to speak of the case of true believers, truly regenerated; and that in the preceding context, where there is no mention of the Spirit, the case of the unregenerate, destitute of the Spirit, is represented. So Arminius and others argue.

I would not indeed expect (if there were not a point of dispute in the case) that the mention of the Spirit would be the thing of which some men, though denominated Christians, would perceive the greatest want in the reading of any context: as I do not see, if their scheme and sentiments are well looked into, that they generally put anything in religion, as to its ordinary causes, principles, and practice, but what might be accounted for, if there was no mention of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures, or in the world at all. As to the argument, it is true that the Spirit is not mentioned in the preceding context, nor is He mentioned in all the sixth chapter, where the case of sincere believers, with respect to sin and holiness, is so largely treated of. They have in them the old man and the body of sin (verse 6); they are (verse 22) the servants of God, and have their fruit unto holiness. Yet all

along in that chapter there is no mention of the Holy Spirit. If it be said that there is, however, in that chapter what sufficiently distinguishes the case of the true Christian, and regenerate person, as there meant, the same may be said of the latter context of chapter vii., as hath been shown largely and clearly in the explication of it.

At the same time it is to be considered, that the law of the mind, and the law in the members, are expressions that are to be found nowhere else in the Scriptures. Yet we cannot justly infer that what is meant by these expressions occurs nowhere else. That the opposition and conflict of the law of the mind against the flesh, or law in the members, is not that of natural conscience or mere reason, has been shown, as it has been, that the law of the mind as to its principle is holiness, implanted in the soul by the Holy Spirit; or the law of God put in the mind and heart, according to the grace and promise of the new covenant.

There is indeed great complaint of the flesh; yet nothing appears in the preceding context that amounts to walking after the flesh. But on the contrary, we have cause to conclude that a heart habitually delighting in the holiness of the law of God, and in ordinary conflict with the inward motions of sin, as is there represented, is as great an evidence of a man's not walking after the flesh, as can possibly be imagined to be in the case of any man in whom sin remaineth at all.

Let us now observe how Dr Taylor* interprets this

* Dr John Taylor of Norwich, whose work, "A Paraphrase with Notes on the Epistle to the Romans. To which is prefixed: A Key to the Apostolic Writings" (London, 1745), comes in for criticism time and again in Fraser's "Treatise on Sanctification."

text. Here is the first part of his paraphrase of it: "But now under the gospel the most encouraging hopes smile upon us, and we have the highest assurance that those are quite discharged from the penalty of the law, and disengaged from the servitude of sin, who embrace the faith of the gospel: if so be they make that faith a principle of obedience, and do not choose to live in wickedness, according to the instigation of fleshly appetite."

In this passage several things come to be observed. (1) For—them which are in Christ Jesus—he gives, "Who embrace the faith of the gospel." This falls in with the notion of Castalio and Le Clerc, for confuting which enough hath been said already. (2) The paraphrase expresses what is now under the gospel: and what the writer states in opposition thereto is the Mosaic law, the weak and lifeless dispensation, as he calls it, of the law (which is an erroneous and absurd way of representing that dispensation), and the condition of a wretched, enslaved, condemned Jew under it. Yet nothing can be marked out in the paraphrase, as now under the gospel, but what did truly (though not with the same degree of light and comfort) take place under the Mosaic legal dispensation. In that time and state of things, the most encouraging hopes did smile on men, and they had the highest assurance of being quite discharged from the penalty of the law, and disengaged from the servitude of sin, who sincerely embraced the faith of the promise, by which, even in these times, the gospel was preached to them. In these times there were good men, who made their faith a principle of obedience, etc. (3) The expression of the paraphrase implies that persons may be in Christ in the

sense of the text who do not make their faith a principle of obedience, which is inconsistent with what hath been shown to be the Apostle's meaning.

The paraphrase proceeds thus: "But (do choose to live) in faith and holiness, according to the dictates of the inward man, or the rational faculty." That the inward man means something more than merely the rational faculty has been here proved on chapter vii. 22. His putting "the rational faculty" for the Spirit, as in the text, he endeavours to justify in his note. There he says "*pneuma*, Spirit, certainly is not used in the same sense throughout this chapter. Verses 10, 16, it signifies the spirit of our mind—the supreme part of our constitution, or the principle of reason, by which we discern, approve, and choose the truth." These two are all the places in this chapter that he brings as meaning by the spirit the human spirit, or principle of reason. But they do not answer his purpose in interpreting this first verse. For in verse 16, our spirit being set in opposition to the Spirit itself, shows that by the former is there meant the human spirit. The expression is not so (verse 1), but absolutely the Spirit. If the word spirit is in any place so connected with another word, expression, or argument, as shows it is there to be understood of the human spirit, this makes no reason for understanding it so, when the spirit is mentioned absolutely, without any such connection, or particular reason for understanding it in that way.

As to verse 10, he there alters our translation in the column opposite to his paraphrase, and for, The body is dead because of sin, he translates, with respect to sin, and so he gives the next clause, The Spirit is life (not because, as in our translation, but) with respect to

righteousness. And to this translation of his own, he suits his paraphrase thus: "The sinful appetites and affections of the body are slain in you—your spiritual part is alive, is in a healthy vigorous condition with respect to righteousness."

This method is far from being fair. If he would give our translation in one column, as he pretends to do, he should give it as it is, and if he should prove in a note that our translation was not just, he might thereby warrant his paraphrase. It occurs happily, however, that in his note, when he meant to support his paraphrase, himself brings forth what justifies our translation. *Dia*, with an accusative, says he, signifies with reference to, or on account of. But could the preposition, as himself relates, be rendered, on account of sin, and on account of righteousness, doth this make such odds of sense from, because of sin and because of righteousness, that our translation should be altered for it, when it could well stand, according to what he mentions concerning the preposition?

But what reason can be offered for using, instead of body (verse 10), "sinful appetites and affections of the body," and for the Spirit, to put "your spiritual part?" Dr Taylor has certainly mistaken the meaning of this tenth verse. I venture to express myself concerning it as follows. As the Apostle hath in his eye the comfortable subject of the resurrection of the dead, suggested more fully in the following verse, I think the word body (verse 10) may be taken for person (see on chapter vi. 12); and the Spirit is evidently meant of the Spirit of God, mentioned in the preceding ninth verse and twice in the immediately following verse. So the sense of the whole verse may be thus expressed: "If

Christ be in you by your having His Spirit, even the Spirit of God dwelling in you (as verse 9), you are, as to the present bodily state and frame of your persons, appointed indeed to die because of sin, even the sin of the first Adam, for which all mankind have been adjudged to death; but the Spirit of God, and of Christ in you, will bring you to life at the resurrection, because of righteousness, even the righteousness of One, the second Adam," as is more fully expressed in the next verse.

We have Dr Taylor's criticism concerning the Greek preposition *dia*, with an accusative, in verse 10; we may next see how he manages with it as constructed with a genitive. This is in verse 11, and as we have come so near it, it is not amiss that we observe it. There for *dia—pneumatos*, he gives, Because of the Spirit. What reason could he give for this? It is the case that *dia* in that construction very commonly signifies *per*, by; and my lexicon gives that as the first sense of the preposition in that construction, according to which we translate. Hedericus gives no sense of the preposition with a genitive that will answer this writer's purpose; nor doth Pasor, who mentions very many instances of it in that construction. But the author seems to have been more anxious to screen his particular hypothesis and opinion from hurt than to give a just and well-warranted interpretation of this text. That heavenly Being or Agent, which is commonly called the Holy Ghost, he did not believe more than he believed the Son to be truly and by nature God. But he was sensible that it would be a striking proof of his being so, if quickening the dead, or raising the dead, were ascribed to him. So, instead of our translation, which renders justly, according to the

use of the Greek language, He that raised up Christ shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit—he gives—because of His Spirit; and, according to this, he gives in his paraphrase thus: "He who raised Christ, will restore to a glorious immortal life—even your bodies, because you are sanctified by His Spirit." But this cannot be supported by any just criticism.

We have seen that the two texts, which Dr Taylor brings out of this same chapter, do not answer his purpose in rendering, after the spirit, by, "according to the dictates of—the rational faculty." Neither these two verses, nor any other that he could bring, give any countenance to that paraphrase. In that expression (verse 1) which walk—after the Spirit, the Apostle certainly speaks in relation to the Spirit of God. We have sufficient cause to think so, from the manner in which the Apostle states the opposition between the flesh and the Spirit (mentioned here, verse 1), and follows it out through the following context; wherein after opposing flesh and Spirit several times, he at length explains what he means by Spirit in this opposition, when he tells the Roman Christians (verse 9) that they were not in the flesh but were in the Spirit, by having the Spirit of God dwelling in them. It is that Spirit that is meant (verses 10, 11), as hath been just now observed; and when (verse 13) he mentions Christians through the Spirit mortifying the flesh, it is the Spirit of God, in opposition to the flesh, that is meant, even according to Dr Taylor. Nor can it be doubted that walking after the Spirit, in the first verse, means the same way of walking and the same influence that is meant (verse 14), where it is said, As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. They

who walk after the Spirit (verse 1) are the same who are led by the Spirit of God (verse 14).

Upon the whole, I conceive the matter thus: In the 7th chapter he mentions the inward man as delighting in the law of God, and says (verse 25), With the mind I myself serve the law of God. These expressions, the inward man, the mind, and the law of his mind, signify the soul itself as renewed—the new man, and principle of holiness within him. Here in the next following verse (chapter viii. 1) he means the same way of walking and serving God, according to the inward man, and law of his mind, with the superadded idea of the Spirit of God dwelling in the Christian, and continuing to influence the inward man and law of the mind, in this way of walking. Having here (verse 1), once mentioned the Spirit, we see he keeps Him much in view, with regard to His various influence and assistance granted to Christians, down to verse 27.

The dictates of the rational faculty (if men understood them) and the Spirit of God do direct and lead to the same way of walking. But there is a power and efficacy in the influence of the Spirit that is not in the dictates of the rational faculty. The Apostle's meaning by "the Spirit," as stated in opposition to "the flesh" in this 8th chapter, is so very clear that it was very wrong, and somewhat perverse, to use in paraphrase for the Spirit, the rational faculty.

PARAPHRASE.—1. As I have showed, that true Christians are, by the faith that hath truly united them to Christ, brought into a justified state, and have the blessedness that God imputeth righteousness to them; and have showed that true believers, being dead to sin, and made free from its dominion, are become servants

of God and of righteousness in ordinary, sincere, and earnest conflict against the motions of sin within them; it clearly follows, on the one hand, that there is now no condemnation to them who are truly united to Christ, and, on the other hand, that it is the certain characteristic of such that their conversation and walk is not regulated or directed according to the flesh, or the lusts thereof (whatever temptation and sad exercise they may have by these), but by the principle of holiness in the new man, and by the Holy Spirit of God, under whose special influence the new man, the law of their mind, is.

Great and Precious Promises

BY THE

Rev. LACHLAN MACKENZIE, Lochcarron.*

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the pollution that is in the world through lust."—*2 Peter i. 4.*

Faith in the divine promises and in unseen objects is the great support and consolation of all true Christians. The happiness of the people of God is not in what they see; it consists in promises. The happiness of children, even of great men's children, consists not in what they presently possess, but in what their parents mean to do for them. Abraham and his immediate successors are

* The Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie (familiarly known as "Mr Lachlan") was minister of Lochcarron from 1782 to 1819. His most famous sermon (of which an outline is given in the *Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*), says Dr Kennedy, was on "The Babe in Bethlehem." Dr Kennedy bears the following striking testimony to him as a preacher: "His preaching was always remarkable. His great originality of thought and manner, his apt and striking illustrations, his clear and emphatic utterance, the unction and authority with which he spoke, his close dealing with the conscience, his dexterous and tender handling of the cases of the tempted, his powerful appeals, his solemn earnestness, and his frequent outbursts of impassioned feeling, could not fail to win for him a measure of acceptance, as they gave him a measure of power beyond that of any of his other brethren."—(*Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*, 1897 Edit., p. 62).

held up to our view as the great example of faith. Now their temporal or spiritual happiness in this world did not consist in present possession. Palestine is called the land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey, and it was promised to Abraham as a type of heaven. Now, the children of Israel did not possess it for many years after the promise was given. It was but a small part that Abraham himself enjoyed of that pleasant country, and his posterity sojourned for several years in Egypt. But they had a promise of Canaan, and this was the joy and rejoicing of their hearts. Now, there is a heavenly Canaan promised to the children of God, and this is their joy and happiness. They have not much in possession, but they have their all in the divine promise. The children of this world may tell them, as the son of a tenant said once to the son of a laird, "I have a better coat than you." But the children of God may answer as the gentleman's child did, "But my father is richer than your father." And what is the gospel but a promise of eternal life? and this life is in the Son. There is a heavenly Canaan promised, and if we can prove our relation to the Lord Jesus Christ, we have a title to it as sure as the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob could have to the earthly Canaan, owing to their relation to these holy men. In speaking further upon these words,

I. I shall point out to you wherein consists the exceeding greatness and preciousness of the promises made to the people of God.

II. The character of the children of the promise—they are partakers of the divine nature.

III. The effect of embracing the promise—they escape the corruption that is in the world through lust.

I. I shall point out to you wherein consists the exceeding greatness and preciousness of the promises made to the people of God. Things are reckoned great and precious among all men for their intrinsic value, as food and raiment, land and possession, and all the absolute necessaries of life. They are reckoned precious for the value set upon them, as gold, silver, and precious stones, and the favours we receive from near and dear friends and relations. And if the things that are necessary for this life are so very valuable, how precious are the things that are necessary for the spiritual and heavenly life! Now, the great things promised to the people of God are: 1. A kingdom of glory in the life to come. 2. Grace to prepare them for the kingdom of heaven, and all needful spiritual supplies during their passage through this wilderness. 3. Such a competent portion of the good things and comforts of life temporal as the wisdom of God shall see meet for them—and these temporal good things are very precious, as they proceed from divine love, flow from the promises, and come to them through the precious channel of prayer; and in these three things consist the greatness and preciousness of all the divine promises.

1. There is a kingdom of glory promised to the people of God in the life to come, and this promise was made before the foundation of the world. Canaan was promised to the children of Israel long before they were born, and this, not for their own deservings, but because they were the children of faithful Abraham. And before we had a spiritual or even a natural being, grace is given us in Christ before the world began. We are chosen in Christ and obtain the kingdom, not because we deserve it, for we are sinners, but because he had

made us his people. There is a kingdom prepared for them—and our Lord tells us it was prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

They were chosen in Christ. Christ was chosen, and they were chosen with Him to be His people; and, as they were chosen, there was prepared for them a kingdom they were to inherit. When God prepared a kingdom, He surely knew the people for whom it was prepared. He tells them at the day of judgment, in plain language, it was prepared for them. And as it was prepared from the foundation of the world, it was not for any merit He saw in them; for they were sinners. He did not prepare it because He saw they were friends; for Scripture says they were enemies, and that He died for such. When a great man marries, he makes a provision for all his children, and for some of them perhaps before they have a being. But a great man cannot know whether he will have children, or what number he may have. This cannot be said concerning God; for He surely knew all His spiritual seed for whom He was preparing the kingdom. They could not certainly convert themselves, or give themselves a spiritual birth; and if a man believes anything at all, he must believe that God knew beforehand whom He meant to convert, sanctify, and save; and consequently He knew for whom He was preparing this kingdom. There is a kingdom then promised and prepared for all the elect of God, and as there is a kingdom promised and prepared,

2. There is grace promised to prepare them for the kingdom of heaven, and all needful spiritual supplies during their passage through this wilderness. When God chose His people He saw that they were sinners—that they were foul—that they were graceless. He

purposed then to give them grace, and He gave them grace in Christ Jesus before the world began. Grace is the most precious thing in this world. It does not come by chance; a man obtains it in consequence of the divine purpose. Grace is the execution of the divine decree—the performance of the divine promise. All the grace necessary from their first call till they arrive safe in glory is comprehended in the grace given in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. i. 9), and it consists in the following things:—It is promised—(1) They shall obtain quickening grace. (2) Renewing and restoring grace. (3) Strengthening and comforting grace. (4) Persevering grace to the end of their journey.

(1) They shall obtain quickening grace. The Redeemer shall see the travail of His soul in a numerous spiritual seed. His children shall be like the dew from the womb of the morning, adorned with all the beauty of holiness, and shining in the bright robes of their Redeemer's righteousness. Our Lord informs us that all that the Father gives Him shall come unto Him. He quickens whom He will. Now, the first sign of quickening grace is a feeling of sin and a sight of need. When the Spirit comes He will convince the world of sin. A person that has a natural life will have feeling of heat and cold, hunger and thirst, and all the wants of the animal life. And when God quickens us we have a sense of our spiritual needs, and cry to Him that can supply our wants. It is God that quickens those who were dead in trespasses and sins. And when He quickens He gives faith, and this faith, the gift of God, is given to all whom the Father gives Him. And as natural life has a feeling of its own wants, and will naturally suggest to us the things we are to do to supply

them, the spiritual life does the same. The Spirit that quickens convinces of sin—we see our filth and misery, and this excites a desire after deliverance from both. The gospel proposes a remedy—it shows us the atonement—pardon is procured by virtue of the Saviour's great sacrifice. When this is seen and believed, it purifies the heart. The heart is naturally foul, and as a putrid lake produces a number of disagreeable living creatures, the foul heart produces swarms of nauseous and unbelieving thoughts. In the gospel there is a fountain to wash in, and a river of life; and when a stream from this river passes through the heart, it cleanses the thoughts from sin. The nature of grace is to cleanse, to sanctify, to enlighten, as well as to save; and when it quickens the soul it also sanctifies the heart.

(2) There is a promise of renewing and restoring grace. The language of God to His people when they fall is this, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." And again, "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely." The royal Psalmist acknowledges that God had restored his soul and led him in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Before Peter fell, our Lord informed him that Satan wished to sift him like wheat, but that He had prayed for him. The gospel is a declaration of glad tidings to perishing lost sinners in general. Now, the gospel had been weaker than the old covenant of works if there had not been a pardon upon record on the renewal of our repentance. Accordingly, we are desired to do our first works and return to our first love. Indeed, the language of Scripture upon this subject is very strong, "O harlot, hear the word of the Lord"; and again, "Though thou hast played the harlot with

many lovers, yet return to me, saith the Lord." And if this was not the language of the gospel, we may well ask, Who then could be saved? Which of us has not broken the covenant of our God? Have we not treacherously given that heart to the creature which belongeth to the Creator? And if the very best of us was asked the question, "Have we not cause of fear if there was no promise of renewing and restoring grace? Have we not grieved the Spirit, hardened our own hearts, and benumbed our consciences with sin?" and if we must plead guilty to these charges, what would come of us if the gospel did not offer us pardon. If this doctrine was not true, the people of God were the most miserable objects upon the face of the earth. We acknowledge that they are greater sinners than others; for they sin not only against light and knowledge, which the wicked may do, but they sin against grace also. They have abused the grace of God, and grieved the Holy Spirit, and driven away His motions from their souls. Now, there is this addition to their guilt which is not in the sins of the wicked. And is there any promise for such? Yes, where sin has abounded grace does much more abound. That Christ is offering restoring and renewing grace is clear from the description given us of the Church of Laodicea, "They were wretched, and miserable, poor, blind, and naked." And yet they are invited to buy gold tried in the fire, and white raiment, and eye-salve. The Saviour assures us that He loved that Church notwithstanding the misery of their spiritual condition. He invites them to renew their repentance, and that He will give them the consolation of His grace; and if we are in the same state, we have the same encouragement and promise.

(3) There is a promise of strengthening and comforting grace. We are called with a holy calling; we are brought into a state of holiness and virtue; we have spiritual enemies, and we must fight against them. When the Israelites came out of Egypt, the surrounding nations looked upon them with a jealous eye, and they had several battles to fight before they got possession of the promised land. But they became impatient at last, and despaired of seeing the accomplishment of the promise. Our spiritual enemies stand in our way; we have found the combat fierce, and it is no easy matter to fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Unbelief is ready to suggest awful things, and magnify the greatness of the danger, and the many and insurmountable difficulties that lie in our way. Our carnal reason and our carnal friends, as well as our spiritual enemies, are a clog to our souls in the ways of God. But our Lord is the great Captain of our Salvation, and our High Priest before the Throne, so that we may plead for strength and grace in the time of need. His grace shall be sufficient for us, and as our day so shall our strength be, for He will not leave nor forsake us. When we pass through the fire and water we shall neither be burned nor drowned; and, though we are no better than worms in our own sight, yet by divine strength we shall even thrash the mountains. Like our divine Master, we shall drink of the brook in our way, and the comforts of the Holy Ghost, through the promises of the gospel, shall strengthen our hearts and dispel our doubts. By keeping near the waters of the sanctuary our souls shall grow like the willows. And when at other times we are like a parched wilderness, the dews of His salvation shall descend upon our

souls. These sweet influences shall refresh our hearts and invigorate us in the ways of God. And the grace that strengthens and comforts also purifies the soul more and more; and the more holy we become, the more our comforts and strength will grow. By waiting upon God He promises to strengthen our hearts. Now, we require strengthening and comforting grace: *First*, Against the attacks of infidelity and suggestions of unbelief. *Second*, Against the strong corruptions of our own hearts. *Third*, Against all outward temptations that surround us.

First, We require strengthening and comforting grace against the attacks of infidelity and the suggestions of unbelief. When the apostle mentions some that had denied a capital point in Christianity, he adds immediately, "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure." Though the Word of God is immovable as a rock, the scoffs of infidels, and our sinful carnal reason have a great influence over weak and unstable minds. There are deep and high mysteries in Christianity which our reason cannot fathom, and it may ask, with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" But if we believe nothing but what we can understand, we shall prove sceptics in philosophy as well as divinity. Reason tells us there is a God, and He existed from eternity. But can reason understand this? Nor can we understand many things that exist in the material world. It is grace, then, that strengthens us to believe the deep doctrines of revelation. Our Lord tells us so when He says, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this to thee, but my Father who is in heaven." And, as we require strength against the attacks of infidelity, we require it

against the suggestions of unbelief. When we speak of unbelief, we generally mean the thoughts that disturb us respecting our own personal interest in the promises and the truth of their accomplishment, and we certainly require grace for this—for no man can believe except it be given him. Nevertheless, we are required to believe and to apply the promises to ourselves. If faith is the gift of God, we are to prize His gift highly—ask it fervently from Him, and believe Him sincerely when He says, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you." And we are to wait at His footstool until we obtain our request.

Second, Against the strong corruptions of our own hearts. Where is the man, whether converted or unconverted, but has strong sinful propensities to struggle against? The Apostle Paul was a chaste, regular, well-behaving man, and he cries, "O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?" No doubt, struggles, prayers, and endeavours have their use, but we must acknowledge that nothing less than grace can subdue sin and change the nature and the heart. After all our endeavours we must come to the Saviour, and none but Himself can cast out sin, and put spirit, and life, and comfort in our souls.

Third, Against all the outward temptations that surround us. Our hearts are like dry fuel, we may even add, like gunpowder, ready to take fire at every temptation that applies to our corruption. And these temptations and snares are many and various. We are equally exposed to them from friends and enemies, from our secular concerns, and even from the duties of religion. We cannot suppose any state or any par-

ticular occasion that is not exposed to danger of one kind or other. A single word or a single glance may raise a flame which may cost many years and many prayers to quench and subdue. We see and hear with peril, we breathe an infected air, and we ought to carry an antidote about with us. People who must be among the sick often take something to prevent infection. Now, grace is what makes our souls strong against the infection of sin. Grace guards all the avenues. Job made a covenant with his eyes, and the Psalmist prays to turn away his eyes from beholding vanity. Now there is a promise of strengthening grace, for, according to our day, so shall our strength be. His grace shall be sufficient for us, not only against the invisible attacks of our spiritual enemies, but also against all outward temptations to sin. When people are faithful to the grace they received, and honestly wish to be kept from sin, there is no doubt but the providence and the grace of God will take care of them. This is clear in the instances of Joseph and David. Though the temptation of the former was strong, God took care of him because he trusted in Him. David fell, because, instead of praying against the temptation, he yielded, and suffered himself to be overcome. There is a promise of grace in the time of need; but it is when one can plead the promise that we can call it our own. There are many promises of support and assistance in Scripture. When we find our need of one of them, and plead it as suitable to our case, we have an interest in it, and it is not our own until we receive it by faith. Are we attacked with inward unbelief and outward temptation of sin? Let us believe the promise, "Fear not, worm Jacob, thou shalt thrash the mountains." Our great

High Priest knows the heart of such as are exposed to temptations. He was tempted Himself, and He had a feeling for those who are tempted also. And if we honestly apply to Him, and trust in Him, He will give us grace to assist in the time of need.

(4) There is a promise of persevering grace. It is God that begins the work and it meets with opposition, not only from the human heart, but likewise from all the enemies of His glory, whether visible or invisible. There is a formidable conspiracy against the least grace in the heart of any saint. And if God had not resolved and promised to carry on the work it must surely fail—where He has begun it He will surely carry it on. Our Lord will not put it in the power of His enemies to scoff and say, "This man began a spiritual building and could not finish it." If there was not security in the promise for our perseverance, I do not believe that a single soul could be saved. And we might ask the greatest Christians upon earth what secured their standing. Is it the grace they possess, or the grace that is in Christ Jesus? There are some make a better use of grace than others; but in the nature of things grace will make people faithful, vigilant, and honest. If people are not so, they may conclude they have not yet received grace.

If people seemingly devout afterwards fell away, it does not affect the doctrine of perseverance in the least. If they went out from us they were not of us. If people turn cold and neglect means and ordinances, we may, without breach of charity, conclude they were not honest at first. There are three things secure our perseverance—(1) The nature of grace; (2) the promise of God; (3) the prayers of His people.

(1) The nature of grace. It is like every other principle, it grows. Is it probable that an elegant scholar who has made progress in science will give up his pursuit and plunge in ignorance and barbarity? Is it probable, or even possible, that the man who has been often feasted with the food of angels all his days would again plunge in the ditch and wallow in the mire? It is not.

(2) We may argue the perseverance of His people from the divine promise. He that has begun the work will finish it, for He will never leave nor forsake us. The soul is immortal, and it must live for ever. Now, grace is a divine principle; it has the Holy Spirit for its author. If a parent will provide for the well-being of his child, we may conclude that God will secure the life of grace. It is His image on the soul; He loves His own image, and it is the object of His care. It is true, Adam and the evil angels lost the divine image; but the cases are widely different. They stood upon the strength of the grace bestowed upon them at their creation, and there was no promise to secure their perseverance in holiness. Grace might die, and so might a human soul, if God had so pleased. Scripture says they will live for ever, and the soul that has grace will live happy for ever. Our Lord says, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

(3) We may infer the doctrine of perseverance from the prayers of His people. Where is that Christian who does not make it his daily prayer to God to secure his perseverance in a state of grace? If he possesses such a treasure, he will be anxious to keep his possession. He will put up many ardent petitions to God to keep

him from falling. He will give up the keeping of his soul to God, through Christ, as to a faithful Creator. He knows whom he has believed, and that He will keep what he has delivered to Him against that day. If he has delivered his soul to God a thousand and a thousand times—if he has by faith repeatedly surrendered himself to his Redeemer, hoping to be saved by His blood and prepared for His heavenly kingdom—and if the promise and oath of God are security for such characters, we may safely conclude the perseverance of the people of God. But what if such persons commit sin and fall from their duty? If they do so, the promise of God binds Him to chasten them with rods—to hedge up their way—to bring them to the wilderness—to pursue them with awful providences or terrible temptations till they renew their repentance, and come again, weary and heavy laden, to Christ.

Third, there is a promise of such a competent portion of the good things and comforts of life temporal, as the wisdom of God shall see meet for them. And these temporal good things are very precious, as they proceed from divine love, flow from the promises, and come to them through the precious channel of prayers. Our Lord Himself, in the prayer He taught His disciples, instructs them to pray for their daily bread. Temporal good things, when considered with the relation they have to spiritual things, are far from being small blessings. The Christian asks and receives them from God, and this makes them precious gifts.

If I receive a present from a poor man, I value it for the goodwill of the giver; but if I receive a present from the king, it would give me great pleasure, and the

world would reckon me happy. What makes the whole world, Christians as well as Jews, have such a value for the land of Canaan? It was because God gave it as a gift to the children of His friends, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If a man is a Christian, he gets his temporal blessings from God—they are a part of what is promised in the covenant, and they are consecrated by prayer. A piece of hard, dry, barley bread would be but poor food; but if that piece of bread is left steeping for a night in a vessel full of honey, it would be pleasant to the taste again next day. I was acquainted with a worthy woman that lived once in this parish. She was poor, but her poverty was sanctified. A young man came once into the house in which the old woman lived; she was eating a few potatoes, and had nothing with them. He observed that she had but poor food. She told him she had kitchen with them which he did not see. When he wished to know what it was, she informed him it was Christ. Now, I can say with truth that her few potatoes, without bread, or butter, or milk, were a most precious diet. A graceless worldling, with twenty dishes on his table, never had such a feast. Let Christ be my portion, and sanctify my worldly substance, and then I need not envy the riches or the possessions of those who seek their portion only in this life, and whose names are written in the earth. Worldly people may be surprised that Christians should ask temporal good things from God; and it is much to be lamented that too many of His people, by their practice, show that they deal too much in this doctrine. If they asked and received their temporal good things from God, through prayer, they would not be so distracted with worldly cares as they often are. We find,

however, that His people in Scripture asked their temporal blessings from Himself—that they cost them prayer, and were the fruits of prayer and promises.

Riches, wives, and children, came to them through the channels of prayer, and they often acted faith upon the divine promises before they obtained them. The exaltation of Joseph, David, and Mordecai were temporal things; but when we consider the divine interpositions, and astonishing providences, and the ardent prayers that were engaged in their exaltation, we are led to confess that they were things of great consequence. The temporal and everlasting salvation of the people of God was prompted by these great events. Marriage is a temporal thing. Isaac, the child of promise, got Rebecca from God by prayer—she proved a blessing to his family and a help to his soul. Ahab, the king of Israel, married Jezebel—she proved a curse to his family, and brought destruction upon his soul. Much depends upon temporal things, and they have a great connection with our everlasting state.

Solomon, the wisest of men, says (Prov. iii. 6), "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." There is not a temporal enjoyment but is promised in some part or other of the word; and why are they promised, but that His people may plead them and make them the subject of faith and prayer? When people cut and carve for themselves, they generally pay dear for following their own wisdom without consulting God. His people beg of Him to choose their inheritance for them. He fixes their habitation, and makes a proper choice for them. He is providing a kingdom for them, and He will withhold nothing that is good for them during their minority.

II. The character of the children of promise—they are partakers of the divine nature. The promises of the gospel are let down to the earth to draw up our faith and love to heaven. By embracing the promises we become holy. We never become partakers of holiness but in and through a promise. Now the children of the promise are partakers of the divine nature: 1. By their union with the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. By communion with God in prayer and ordinances. 3. By embracing Christ anew in every promise they plead, whether temporal or spiritual.

1. The children of the promise are partakers of the divine nature by virtue of their union with Christ. That glorious person is offered in the gospel. The gospel is made up of promises. By receiving and welcoming the offer, we are united to Him. Now, that union is explained in Scripture by three strong similitudes. The union of man and wife—of the vine and branches—of the head and body. We are united to the man Christ Jesus, and in and through Him to God. He dwells in His people by His Spirit and by the virtues and graces of the Christian life. Now, this union is as sure and real as the union of the two natures in Himself—the human and the divine. We cannot explain this union between Christ and His people, by which they become holy, though we know it really exists. This union makes us like to God as the wax is like the seal. They become one. They have one nature and holiness. They receive grace, and that grace proceeds from Christ. They have one interest. The husband and wife have one interest; whatever promotes the one advances also the other. If the one is exalted, it reflects honour upon the other. The advancement of the

Redeemer's kingdom is the joy, and, in fact, the advancement of every individual that belongs to Him. They are not complete till the whole are brought in. And they have, in consequence of this, one will. "Thy will be done" is the prayer of every one of them. As far as we pursue the will of God, and no further, are we real Christians? The great design of every dispensation is to make us acquiesce in, and submit to, the will of God. What belongs to Christ in us will submit to the will of God; what is in us of sin will rebel. And when we are entirely brought to His will, we shall be introduced to that kingdom where all the subjects do the will of the King.

2. They are partakers of the divine nature by communion with God in prayer and ordinances. God speaks to His people in His Word, and they speak to Him by faith and prayer. It was the Word that gave them a new nature at first, and it is the same Word that increases and cherishes this new nature in them. In all their wants they are encouraged by promises. By believing promises, they honour God and promote their own comfort, and it is in this way that the communion is kept up. It is through a promise they receive Christ. This is the swaddling cloth in which the heavenly babe is always found; and when we receive Him there is always joy in such an act of faith. Old Simeon rejoiced when he had Him in his arms; and it is only when we have Him in our arms that we can rejoice and have communion with God. Before Simeon had Him in his arms he often embraced Him in his faith. He believed the promise, the great promise that contained Him, and which, like the river of paradise, branched into other promises. And He is still in the promise;

and when we embrace the promise we receive Christ: and this is the way in which communion with God is begun and kept up. Prayer and ordinances are the channel through which we receive divine promises, and divine promises purify the heart and make us rejoice in God. Now, when the Spirit of God enables us to believe the promises, they become our own, we have an interest in them, and they rejoice our hearts.

3. By embracing Christ anew in every promise they plead, whether temporal or spiritual. The covenant of grace is a wonderful covenant. It contains every thing we can wish or want. We have great duties to perform, and great wants to supply, and we have no strength for either. We are commanded to believe and to repent: by experience we find we cannot perform these duties. What will we do then? He promises a new heart (Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26). "He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins" (Acts v. 31); and He says expressly, "Ask and ye shall receive" (Matt. vii. 7); and again, "I will be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them" (Ezek. xxxvi. 7). There is no duty required without a correspondent promise. We have also great wants to get supplied. Are we tossed with great unbelief because we are great sinners, and afraid to come lest we should not be welcome? He Himself says, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." Are our sins deep? He says, "They shall be white like snow." Are we afraid to meddle with the promise, because we did not perform the condition, and do not find such and such qualifications? We are commanded to look to Him that we may be saved. By receiving Him we

find qualifications, for all the promises are yea and amen in Him to the glory of God. If we have great trials, He promises to support us; and if we are in such a state that we can see no promise that can belong us, let us plead the great promise that He came to the world to save sinners. And if we do not see our spiritual needs, He is a great Physician of souls, and can cure all diseases. Now, when we plead a promise, we are to receive Christ, and by believing a promise it is our own —this will purify our hearts and fill them with joy and gratitude. If we go as poor beggars to the Saviour, and are content to live upon His bounty, this is the sure way to be rich, happy, and wise. Let us seek Christ in the promise.

III. The effect of embracing the promise—they escape the pollution that is in the world through lust. Before the prodigal returned to his father's house, he longed for the husks the swine did eat; but after he was re-admitted to his father's table, he did not envy them any longer. The cause why people have such a relish for the pleasures of the world is that they do not taste the sweetness of the promises. Moses had it in his power to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and enjoy the benefit of such adoption. He might enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, but he saw more in the promises made to the people of God. Abraham, at the call of God, left the land of his nativity, and came to the land of Canaan to sojourn there. He received it in a promise as a type of heaven. He did not seek his ultimate happiness in the land of Canaan, for he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Now, what kept such holy men from

plunging in all the irregularities they saw in the world around them? It arose from this, that they embraced the promises as their portion, and believed firmly in that future state of happiness which is reserved for the people of God. The world around them might look upon them as a set of well-meaning enthusiasts—the purity of their conduct and the holiness of their lives they could not call in question; but they would consider their happiness as rather visionary when they spoke of a kingdom and country to be enjoyed after death. They would consider Abraham, the father of the faithful, as a person who had a religious craze, when he made himself believe that an old woman, who was long past child-bearing, would have a child, and the children to spring from this son were to inherit Canaan. His view of a future state, in their opinion, might be as ideal as the notion of his children by Sarah then possessing all the country from the Mediterranean to the river Euphrates. Their principle was, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"; and they acted accordingly. If people who have the benefit of revelation live like brutes, is it a surprise that blind heathens should abandon themselves to all sorts of debauchery? And what hinders the people of God from following the example of infidel Christians? They believe the promises, and by this escape the pollution of lust. The victory that overcomes the world is their faith; it shows them the glory of heaven, the grace and power of Christ, and the danger of yielding to the foe.

From the doctrine we have heard arise the following practical inferences:—1. That though the promises belong to the people of God, and no other at the time can receive comfort from them, yet others are not

excluded from believing and embracing them; and this answers an objection that may arise in the heart of some of my hearers. You say that though these are great and precious, they do not belong to you, and you cannot plead because you have no grace, no faith. Permit me to ask you, Who told you that a man without grace had no right to believe, embrace, or plead a promise? Hear the Saviour Himself (Isa. xlv. 22), "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Had all the ends of the earth grace or faith? The Apostle Peter tells the murderers of Christ (Acts ii. 38, 39), "That the promise was to them and their children, and to all that were afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call." Now the call is to you; you say, You are far off, and have no right to the promises. The apostle tells us (Eph. ii. 17), "That Christ preached peace to them that were far off." Believe the promises and you will be brought nigh. Are there no great and precious promises made to sinners? If you read Isa. xlix. 8, 9 you will find great promises to the Saviour about sinners. Are you then in prison or in darkness? plead the promise. He came to seek and to save lost sinners, and His commandment to you is to believe. And what is faith but embracing and pleading a promise? Come as a sinner to Christ, and in Him you shall find all the promises yea and amen.

2. Again, if we actually have, or earnestly wish to have an interest in the promises, their genuine effect is to produce holiness. And if this is true, we may conclude that those who live in sin are yet strangers to the gospel. When our Saviour was upon earth His very touch, nay, His bare word, cured those who applied to Him. When the blind and the lame showed the world

that they could walk and see, this was proof enough that they applied to Christ for a cure. If the man who was once a sinner adorns the gospel by a good life and conversation, we may give him credit when he tells us that Christ cured his soul. The tree is known by its fruits, and purity is the genuine production of faith. Faith receives Chrst, and if we receive Him He engraves His image upon our soul; and when we receive Christ we receive all the promises with Him. Some of the people of God may follow Christ in the dark. They attempt to believe and find the work difficult. But though they should be in bondage all their days through slavish fear, they are safe. Follow them to their retirements—they endeavour to believe and love Christ. Follow them to their secular concerns—they recommend Him to others. They endeavour to believe and embrace the promises—they find they cannot—they cannot go further. They therefore leave the work in the hand of God; and, though they are without comfort, the everlasting arms are under them, and will secure their happiness. The Israelites at the Red Sea left the work to God, and soon after did join in singing the song of Moses and Miriam. If we love the promises, our lives will be like the gospel.

3. *Lastly*, We may see here the advantages that accrue to us by embracing the promises. And in the *first* place, by believing the promises we secure our everlasting happiness. Those who now are admitted to the joys of paradise (Heb. vi. 12) are said to inherit the promises. Canaan was promised to the Israelites, and they possessed the promises made to their fathers when they enjoyed that pleasant country. Promises may be compared to charters and to bank notes. When a man

receives Christ and the gospel promises, he has a charter for heaven. By embracing other promises, whether spiritual or temporal, we increase our heavenly riches, and we have this additional blessing and comfort, besides that we have a reading of our charter, and this strengthens us more and more. The more money we lay up in the royal bank of heaven, and the more promises we plead and believe, the greater is our stock. Earthly banks pay only simply interest: but though the Saviour sometimes delays His payment, He is sure to give compound interest at last. *Second*, Another advantage arising from this trade of dealing in the promises is that many of our prayers and divine promises which we thought were lost, dead, and buried, shall give us great joy in the accomplishment. There are some merchants whose trade is so extensive that profit is poured in upon them by every wind that blows, or is mentioned in the compass. Such, however, often sustain losses; and many of their vessels suffer shipwreck. Not so the Christian—his prayers are remembered, his tears are in God's bottle, and his cup of cold water shall be amply rewarded. His works of faith and labours of love shall be all registered, and meet him with comfort. The promising God will be a performing God. If there is delay in accomplishing a promise, the Christian fares as Mordecai did—it shall be accomplished suddenly and unexpectedly. When God looks in His book He finds such a man pleading such a promise; and, waiting upon Him and doing his duty, the answer will be precious and astonishing. *Third*, To conclude, the more we believe the bare word of God's promise, the more we honour Him and promote His glory. We know the story of the philosopher to whom Alexander gave an

order to draw upon his treasurer. He drew a great sum. When the first of the present reigning family got a right to the crown of Great Britain, he gave promises and notes to several persons that applied for posts. One man applied, and was offered a note. He told his Majesty his royal word was enough. This pleased the King so much that he said he would get his suit whoever would be disappointed. Let us then make it the business of our lives to live upon the promises, and follow the example of those who now inherit them. Prayer and promises feed faith, and faith supports the Christian life. God bless His Word! Amen.

The Liberal Devising Liberal Things

BY THE

Rev. ALEXANDER FRASER, D.D., Kirkhill.*

The liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand."—*Isaiah xxxii. 8.*

The design of the prophet, from the beginning of the chapter to the verse I have read, is to describe the nature of the Messiah's kingdom; the advantages of His government; the character of His faithful subjects, contrasted with that of His opponents. As to the nature of His kingdom, he says, "Behold a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment." The Messiah is termed, by way of eminence, the righteous One; not merely because He is righteous in Himself, but because He invests the subjects of His government with His own righteousness. Hence Jeremiah says concerning Him, "This is the name by which He shall be called, The Lord *our* righteousness"

* The above sermon was preached at Tain on 27th August, 1800, before the Northern Missionary Society at their first meeting. Dr Fraser was one, if not the most distinguished, of a very distinguished ministerial line of six generations. The name of the "Frasers of Kirkhill" was justly famed in their day. Dr Alexander Fraser was minister of Kirkhill, where he died in 1802, so that when he preached the above sermon he was on the borders of the better land. When the Rev. James Calder heard him as a young man he notes in his diary: "On Saturday young Mr Fraser preached—a pious youth, greatly acceptable to the Lord's people—the son, the grandson, the great-grandson, of eminent ministers of Christ."

(Jer. xxiii. 6). And the reason of giving Him that name the Apostle illustrates: "God made Him to be sin for us, though He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21).

All who have an interest in Him, He hath made "kings to God and His Father" (Rev. i. 6; v. 10), enabling them, by His grace, to reign over their irregular passions here, as an earnest of their being honoured to sit with Him on His throne hereafter. And when any of His faithful followers are entrusted with an office, having authority over others, they discharge the duties of that office conscientiously, knowing that "He who ruleth among men must be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord."

The advantages of the Messiah's government the prophet next describes: "And a man shall be an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." It were too much to expect all these advantages from a mere man. But the prophet had previously shewed that the Messiah, though a child born, should be the mighty God (Isaiah ix. 6); that His name, expressive of His nature, should be Immanuel, God with us (Isaiah vii. 14). It was by assuming the nature of man that He was qualified to bear the sins of men, and so prove an all-sufficient Saviour to His people.

His people in the present state, like travellers in the sandy desert, are exposed to several dangers, which would extinguish their life, did they not find in Him preservation. As travellers in the desert were sometimes overtaken by the hot wind, which suddenly suffocated them, unless they found a place to hide them

from its influence; so the followers of the Messiah in this world are overtaken by temptations, which would suddenly extinguish the spiritual life if they did not find in Him resources and protection. He deals with each of them, as formerly with Peter, when He said, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke xxii. 31, 32). He fulfils to them that promise, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (2 Cor. x. 13). As travellers in the desert were exposed to a whirlwind, which raised huge masses of sand, turned them violently round, then, letting them fall, overwhelmed them with destruction; so the followers of the Messiah are "by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. ii. 3). They are originally under the sentence and the awe of eternal destruction. But they find in the Messiah a covert from the tempest. For "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Romans viii. 1). They can say with confidence, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died" (Romans viii. 34). As travellers in the desert were subject to thirst, which, if not allayed, ended in death; so the followers of the Messiah are in this world subject to infirmities, proceeding from the depravity of their nature, which would end in spiritual death, did they not receive from Him, "in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell," supplies of grace, which, like rivers of water in a dry place, afford them perpetual preservation and refreshment. As travellers in the desert were exposed to excessive heat, so that sometimes

their life was extinguished by a sudden stroke of the sun, and at other times their strength was gradually exhausted, and they fainted by the way; so the followers of the Messiah, in the present state, are exposed to calamities, which are apt suddenly to overwhelm them, or gradually to wear out their strength and patience. But, as the shadow of a great rock afforded the traveller a cool and safe protection from the heat; so the Messiah, by the views which He gives them of His providence, and by the consolations of His blessed Spirit, renews the strength, and confirms the patience of His people, until they depart in safety from the weary land in which they now sojourn.

The prophet proceeds to delineate the character of the Messiah's subjects. "And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim: and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly." It would appear from this description that they are naturally wretched, like the blind, the deaf, the rash, the stammerers. But by submitting to the Messiah they are made happy, in consequence of a thorough change produced on them. Though formerly ignorant and unconscious of spiritual objects, as persons born blind are of light and colours, now they see with conviction the evil of sin, the vanity of the world, the glory of the Saviour, the certainty of a world to come, the reality of eternal rewards and irrevocable punishments. In a word, all the objects of the spiritual world present themselves with conviction to their understandings; just as the objects of the natural world rush on the eyes of a person who was born blind, when his sight is restored.

Though formerly incapable of distinguishing the voice of God, as the deaf are unable to hear sounds, yet now they hear the voice of the Redeemer in His Word, and they can distinguish it from that of a stranger. Yea, they comply with His call. When they hear Him say, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew xi. 28), their souls answer in sincerity, "Behold we come unto Thee, for Thou art the Lord our God" (Jer. iii. 22). "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John vi. 68). Though formerly they rashly made choice of this world as their portion, through ignorance of a better, they are now enabled deliberately to make choice of God in Christ as their portion, saying, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none on earth whom I desire besides Thee." Though formerly unqualified to celebrate the Redeemer's praises, or to talk to others with propriety of His conduct towards them, now, in consequence of the views they have received, and the choice they have made, their tongues are eloquent in His praise.

The knowledge bestowed on the subjects of the Messiah's kingdom, as it leads them to rectify what is amiss in themselves, so it enables them to detect what is wrong in others. They do not mistake specious vice for virtue. The men of the world estimate a person by the outward advantages and natural endowments which he possesses, such as birth, fortune, affability; who, on account of his irreligous sentiments and immoral conduct, is notwithstanding entitled to no esteem. The men of the world reckon persons bountiful, who squander their wealth with a profuse hand, while they are in reality churls, because their apparent bountiful-

ness proceeds from selfish motives, a desire to gratify their inordinate desires, or to flatter their personal vanity. But with the people of the Messiah, "the vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor shall the churl be said to be bountiful."

In regard the advantages of the Messiah's government are so many, and the change produced by it on the sentiments and manners of mankind so great, some would be ready to conclude that He and His government would experience no opposition from the world; to guard against a misapprehension of this nature, the prophet proceeds to state the certainty of an opposition to the Messiah, together with the character of His opponents: "For the vile person will speak villainy, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the Lord, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and He will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail." I apprehend that the prophet has more immediately in His view the Pharisees and rulers of the Jews at the period in which our Saviour appeared in the world. Every part of this description is applicable to them, as we learn from the account given of them in the New Testament. They were vile persons, that is, according to the Scripture idiom, irreligious persons, in rejecting the Messiah; they spake villainly, in avowing openly, that they did reject Him; their heart wrought iniquity, by contriving schemes to tarnish His character, and to compass His death; they practised hypocrisy, by pretending a great respect for the ordinances of religion; they uttered error against the Lord, by blaspheming Him who is Jehovah. And after His ascension, they endeavoured to deprive His people of the provision made for their spiritual wants, by prohibiting the apostles to

teach the doctrine of the resurrection, or to preach in the name of Jesus: thus endeavouring to make empty the soul of the hungry, and to cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. Again, these men are properly called churls, because they opposed the Messiah, from a principle of covetousness. This appears from the high priest's counsel to the sanhedrim, "If we let Him alone, all men will believe on Him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation" (John xi. 48). They could not deny His miracles, and were even convinced that they were evidences of a divine mission; but they stifled their conviction, and resolved to cut Him off, for fear of the temporal losses they might sustain if the nation should believe on Him.

As the principle on which they were to reject the Messiah is laid before us, so likewise the means by which they would oppose Him and His followers are accurately described. "The instruments also of the churl are evil. He deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words even when the needy speaketh right." And these means are of two kinds—secret calumnies and open prosecutions: the first is termed "lying words," the last "pronouncing judgment"; for so the expression may be literally translated from the original. And, that both these means were used by the rulers of the Jews against Christ and His followers, the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles clearly shew. The character here given of the first adversaries of the Messiah and His followers is exceedingly applicable to persons, in every period of the Church, who had a form of godliness, while they were strangers to the power of it. Influenced by covetousness, actuated by malignity, clothed with hypocrisy, they have persecuted such as had the genuine

spirit of Christianity; sometimes tarnishing their character by secret calumnies; at other times stripping them of their privileges by open persecutions.

In regard the opposition to the Messiah was to be so violent, according to the prophet's representation, some might imagine that His kingdom would never be established in the world; to remove that misapprehension the prophet observes, "But the liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall He stand." By the "liberal" the prophet means the faithful followers of the Messiah as a collective body. They are liberal because self-love is removed, and the love of God is implanted in their hearts as the predominant principle. This enlarges the heart and opens the hands. By "liberal things" he understands the scheme of redemption published by the gospel the most liberal plan for promoting the happiness of mankind ever made known to the world. "The liberal *deviseth* liberal things"; that is, they that are taught by the Messiah contrive to give a knowledge of the scheme of redemption published by the gospel to those who are ignorant of it, and in consequence of the knowledge communicated by the gospel the kingdom of the Messiah shall be established. "By liberal things He shall stand."

The words thus understood appear to me suitable to the design of our meeting when we are about to form a society for sending the gospel to the heathen and other unenlightened nations. I propose in further discoursing —I. To illustrate this proposition, that the scheme of redemption published by the gospel is the most liberal plan for promoting the happiness of mankind ever made known to the world.

II. To point out the obligations laid on those who view it in that light to send the knowledge of it to such as are ignorant of it.

III. To endeavour to remove some of the objections that may occur to a candid mind against sending missionaries to the heathen and other unenlightened nations.

I. That the scheme of redemption published by the gospel is the most liberal plan for promoting the happiness of mankind ever made known to the world, we may infer—1. From the Contriver of it. It is not the contrivance of men or of angels, but of God. Concerning it, the prophet says, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him? Who instructed Him and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge and shewed Him the way of understanding?" (Isaiah xi. 13, 14). Certainly no other being directed Him. Put the case then, that a legislator, endowed with the wisdom of Solomon, possessing like him "largeness of heart, as the sand that is by the seashore," should apply his mind to the contrivance of a scheme for promoting the happiness of his fellow-men—would you not expect a liberal scheme? But surely that scheme must be infinitely more liberal, which is the contrivance of unerring wisdom, set to work by boundless love, for the purpose of manifesting infinite mercy. Accordingly, superior beings, who are better qualified than we are to judge of the schemes and works of God, are anxious to pry into the scheme of redemption: "Angels desire to look into these things" (1 Peter i. 12). Those morning stars, when they beheld the world arise from nothing, and saw innumerable

beings called into existence, to partake of their Maker's boundless liberality, celebrated His glory in a hymn of praise. But when they turned their attention to the scheme of redemption, and beheld myriads of beings raised from the greatest misery to life and immortality, by means so stupendous, struck with astonishment, they mused His praise in solemn silence. Hence the cherubims under the law were represented upon the ark with bended heads and outstretched wings as if lost in amazement, while they beheld the mercy-seat which typified the Saviour. And, indeed, the more carefully they examine the scheme of redemption, the more clearly they discern the wisdom which contrived it; for "now unto principalities and powers is made known the manifold wisdom of God through the church" (Eph. iii. 10).

2. The liberality of the scheme of redemption is obvious from the Administrator of it. In order to make a well-contrived scheme, productive of the advantages for which it is calculated, much depends on the person by whom it is administered. Such a person ought to have a right to administer: he should be possessed of wisdom, to direct him; of power, to carry the plans of his wisdom into execution; of mercy and compassion, to interest him in those for whose relief the scheme is contrived. Now, all these qualifications unite, in the highest degree, in our Lord and Saviour. He has a right to administer, in consequence of the Father's appointment, who says, "It is a light thing, that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isaiah xlix. 6).

And He hath also a right to administer, in regard He hath fulfilled, by His obedience, the condition on which the blessings of the scheme were to be dispensed. So the prophet intimates, "When thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed; therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He hath poured out His soul unto death" (Isaiah liii. 10, 12).

The wisdom of this Administrator is infinite. "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3). And His power is irresistible, for He is the "Almighty" (Rev. i. 8). They who believe in Him know with certainty that He is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God for their salvation." He is infinitely merciful as God; and as man He is possessed of a distinguished sensibility of heart. This sensibility was excited by every miserable object which occurred in the days of His flesh. And as His heart was powerfully affected, so His hand was readily extended for their relief. At one time, He saw the people "as sheep having no shepherd, and He was moved with compassion toward them, and He began to teach them many things" (Matthew vi. 34). At another time, when the people were long fasting in a desert place, and in danger of fainting by the way, He had compassion on them, and wrought a miracle to procure them food (Matthew xv. 32). When He saw the sisters of Lazarus deeply affected with grief for the death of their brother, He entered into their feelings. "Jesus groaned in spirit, and was troubled"; yea, He mingled His tears with theirs, "Jesus wept" (John xi. 33, 35). Nor was the sensibility of His heart excited by the distress of His friends alone, but by that of His enemies likewise.

When He looked on Jerusalem, a little before His death, and reflected on the unbelief of its inhabitants, and the impending judgments of God, He wept over it, saying, " If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes " (Luke xix. 41, 42).

Again, this sensibility of heart was increased and confirmed by a personal acquaintance with those distresses, to which any of the human race are liable. He not only felt hunger and thirst, weariness and pain; but He experienced poverty and contempt, desertion of friends, and the persecution of enemies. He was attacked by the temptations of Satan, and tasted of the wrath of God. In a word, He was made subject to all the miseries of life, and to all the agonies of death, " being tempted in all points, like as we are, yet without sin " (Hebrews iv. 15); and in that " He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted " (Hebrews ii. 18). We may therefore conclude that the blessings of the scheme of redemption shall be liberally dispensed, seeing they are at the disposal of so wise, so powerful, so compassionate an Administrator.

3. The superior liberality of the scheme of redemption appears from the condition of those who are the objects of it. Genuine liberality consists in making the miserable happy; now, the objects of the scheme of redemption are the miserable. So our Saviour intimates: " The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to

preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke xiv. 18, 19). Here He informs us that the persons to whom He dispenses the blessings of the scheme of redemption are—the poor, the broken in heart, the captives, the blind, the bruised, those that were commonly relieved in the jubilee year, as insolvent debtors, slaves, persons who had forfeited their inheritance.

If that is allowed to be a liberal scheme which proposes relief to persons labouring under these temporal calamities, how much greater is the liberality of the scheme which offers deliverance from spiritual miseries that are of infinitely greater magnitude? But the objects of the scheme of redemption are—those who are poor, because deprived of God's favour; those who are broken in heart, because under a sentence of condemnation by His righteous law; those who are led captives by Satan at His will; those who are blind, because ignorant of their misery and their remedy; those who are bruised by means of the depravity of their own nature; those who are insolvent debtors, because chargeable with the guilt of sin; those who are slaves to their own lusts; those who have forfeited every claim of right to the inheritance of eternal life. If that scheme is allowed to be liberal which offers relief to persons labouring under *one* of the calamities mentioned, that scheme must be acknowledged to be yet more liberal which offers deliverance to persons labouring under *all* these calamities. But such is the scheme of redemption. Every individual object of it is subject to all these spiritual miseries. So our Saviour intimates, in the case of Laodicea, "Thou knowest not that thou are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. iii. 17). That scheme, therefore, which holds out

deliverance from such an accumulated load of miseries, must be superior in liberality. If the scheme is allowed to be liberal, which offers relief from distress, in one manner, notwithstanding other methods might be found equally conducive to the same end, it will be acknowledged that the scheme has superior liberality, which offers the only possible way of deliverance from miseries that are otherwise irremediable. But such is the scheme of redemption. In it Christ is revealed as the only Redeemer; He is offered as the only Saviour from sin, and all the miseries consequent upon it. For "there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we can be saved" (Acts iv. 12).

Did we range from pole to pole, could we search the extensive universe, we would find no remedy for the miseries brought upon us by sin, but in Him alone. There is no wealth to the poor, but in His unsearchable riches; no liberty to the captive, but in His triumph over the hosts of darkness; no healing to the wounded conscience, but by the application of His blood; no sight to the blind, but through the influences of His Spirit; no comfort to the mourner, but by communion through Him with the God of all consolation; no discharge of the debt of sin, but in consequence of His payment as surety; no freedom to the slave, except the Son shall make him free; no right to the eternal inheritance, but in consequence of His purchase.

If the scheme is allowed to be liberal, which offers its advantages to a few only, that scheme must be allowed to be yet more liberal, which offers its advantages to a great many; but in this respect likewise, the scheme of redemption is of all others the most liberal, because the benefits of it are offered to all mankind. The blessings

of it are not confined to one nation or to one age; they are equally interesting to all nations and to all generations. The Administrator of it proclaims, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isaiah xlv. 22). "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (Isaiah lv. 1). "Whosoever *will*, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17). He commanded those whom He commissioned to publish the glad tidings of salvation, to "teach all nations," to "preach the gospel to every creature." The high and the low, the rich and the poor, the master and the servant, the despot and the slave, the civilized and the barbarous, are equally offered the blessings of redemption, and shall partake of them alike, unless they are excluded by rejecting them; for as to an interest in these, there is no difference of "Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free: but Christ is all and in all" (Col. iii. 11).

4. The superior liberality of the scheme of redemption is evident from the effects of it. The most liberal schemes of human invention effect only an alteration of the miseries which they cannot remove, but the scheme of redemption effectually removes misery. The name of Howard will live in the annals of history, and be celebrated for liberality; because he devoted his time and talents to alleviate the miseries of prisoners, whom he could not set at liberty. But the scheme of redemption is able to "bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house" (Isaiah xlii. 7). Liberality has contrived asylums for the blind, in which they are taught to work, and enjoy society, thus alleviating the evil which it cannot remedy;

but the scheme of redemption bestows the recovery of their sight to the blind. Various plans have been contrived by liberality, which may dry up the tears of the disconsolate, but cannot heal the broken heart: but the scheme of redemption "binds up the broken in heart" (Isaiah lxi. 1); "turns weeping into joy, and mourning to dancing"; enables men "to put off their sackcloth, and girdeth them with gladness" (Psalm xxv. 11).

The greatest advantage of the best scheme contrived by human liberality is to bestow a temporary relief—to confer a transient happiness; but the advantage of the scheme of redemption is that it confers eternal happiness. What avails it, that liberality sets the prisoner free, and restores him to the society of his family and friends? In a little time death follows, arrests him again, separates him for ever from those who are dear to him, and confines him in the prison of the grave. What avails it, that liberality restores the insolvent debtor to the possession of his inheritance? The inexorable messenger of God's law ejects him afresh; for, in defiance of every effort of human liberality, "it remaineth but a little, when they that rejoice shall be as though they rejoiced not, because the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Cor. vii. 30, 31). But O! how superior is the liberality of the scheme of redemption. By it this unrelenting tyrant is vanquished, his captives are admitted to perfect liberty, and are invested with eternal happiness. The gladness communicated by the light of God's countenance here is to them an earnest of that fulness of joy, which they shall receive in His more immediate presence hereafter. The drops of consolation which they taste now are foretastes of the draughts they shall drink out of the rivers of pleasure that are at God's

right hand, and flow for ever. We may therefore conclude that the scheme of redemption published by the gospel, on account of the Contriver, the Administrator, the Objects, and the Effects of it, is the most liberal plan for promoting the happiness of mankind ever made known to the world.

II. I shall endeavour now to point out the obligations, laid on those who view it in this light, to send the knowledge of it to such as are ignorant of it.

1. That this is a duty incumbent on all ministers of the gospel is evident from our Saviour's express command, "Go ye, and teach all nations" (Matthew xxviii. 19, 20). Perhaps it will be said that the command is addressed to the apostles whose commission extended over all the earth, but not to the ordinary teachers of Christianity whose ministry is confined to a particular district. To remove the objection, consider the motive by which the command is enforced, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Did not our Saviour know that the apostles would not remain on earth to the end of the world? Surely. But He knew that some persons would exercise the office of teachers in every period until He should come again, and He encourages all those teachers to perform the duties of their office by the promise of His gracious presence to direct and support them. Now, the command to teach all nations must be addressed to the same persons to whom the motive is applicable; consequently to all ministers of the gospel at present as well as to those who preceded them, and shall follow after them in the same office. To suppose the command addressed to persons of one age, and the motive applicable to those

of another, in fact destroys the whole force of the argument. Still it may be objected that ordinary ministers are commanded " to take heed to the ministry each hath received " (Col. iv. 17); " to feed the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers " (Acts xx. 28); consequently, not to teach all nations. Doubtless it is incumbent on every pastor to discharge the duties he owes to his particular flock; but so far as attention to them is consistent with the general command of teaching all nations, that command is obligatory on every faithful minister of Christ.

2. It is a duty incumbent on all true Christians to send the knowledge of the gospel to the unenlightened nations of the world, as appears from our Saviour's direction, " When ye pray, say, Thy kingdom come " (Matthew vi. 11). The direction is given, without controversy, to all true Christians. All are enjoined to pray for the coming of the kingdom of God: now we must pray, according to the Apostle's injunction, " with understanding " (1 Cor. xiv. 15); consequently, we must offer up the petition in that sense in which our Saviour understood it. And the sense in which He understood it is obvious from the prophecies concerning it. These intimate that the kingdom of God or the kingdom of the Messiah, which is the same, shall extend over all nations. " Ask of me (saith the Father), and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession " (Psalms ii. 8). " He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth; yea, all kings shall fall down before Him, all nations shall serve Him. Men shall be blessed in Him, all nations shall call Him blessed " (Psalm lxxii. 8, 11, 17). We

are therefore bound to pray that the kingdom of Christ may extend over all nations. Again, we must pray with integrity; and integrity requires that we use every lawful means in our power for attaining the object of the petition we offer. But the great means which God hath appointed for extending the kingdom of Christ is the preaching of the gospel. "How shall they believe on Him of whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans x. 14). We are bound, therefore, to send missionaries to preach the gospel to those who are ignorant of it. And, indeed, if we neglect to use means, our negligence will evince that our prayers are not sincere. Put the case, that a person offers up that petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." Suppose, at the same time, he folds up his hands in his bosom, and will not occupy himself in any lawful employment to earn a subsistence; fancying, however, that he is abundantly devout, and that God will grant his request without any exertion on his part to attain it: would not every rational Christian tell such a man, If you pray for your daily bread, work for it; expect an answer to your petition by the blessing of God on your honest industry; if you look for it otherwise, you are under the influence of a spirit of delusion. In like manner, I say to all Christians, if ye pray for the coming of the kingdom of God, use the means in your power for extending it. Give the aid of your counsels and of your money to send missionaries to the heathen, then, otherwise, your prayers are not sincere. You are under the influence of the spirit of error rather than the Spirit of truth.

3. The love of Christ should induce Christians to send the knowledge of the Gospel to those who are

ignorant of it. A sense of the obligations they are laid under, by His love to them, must lead them to devote themselves to His service. So the Apostle argues: "The love of Christ constraineth us; for we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that we who live, should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but to Him who died for us" (2 Cor. v. 14). Now, if the love of Christ constrains Christians to devote their whole lives to His service, it must constrain them to dedicate a part of their time, and of their substance, to advance His kingdom in the world.

4. Sending the gospel to the unenlightened nations promotes the glory of God. Now, Christians are commanded to "do all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). Any measure which is obviously conducive to that end, they are bound to adopt. But God Himself expressly declares that sending the gospel to those who are ignorant of it is for His glory. When He promises the Messiah as a light to the Gentiles, He declares His reason to be, "I am the Lord, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, nor my praise to graven images" (Isaiah xlii. 8). While, therefore, there is a nation on earth practising idolatry, it is incumbent on Christians to send the light of the gospel to every such nation, that they may not bestow on any other the glory due to the Deity alone. Again, God promises, "I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul and Lud that draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles" (Isaiah lxvi. 19). Blessed God! dost thou esteem it thy glory, that missionaries should make known thy fame to those

nations that are yet strangers to thee, and shall we not endeavour, with heart and hand, in a reliance on thy promised aid, to perform that service?

5. Love to their fellow creatures should induce Christians to send the gospel to those who are ignorant of it. We are assured, on the highest authority, that the second great commandment of the law is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew xxii. 39). This command is enforced and rendered more binding on Christians by the love of Christ to them. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you" (John xiii. 34). By the force of these combined principles, the primitive Christians parted with all their substance for the benefit of others, and were contented to take their own share in common with them (Acts ii. 44, 45). Ought not the same principles induce you to give a pittance of your substance for the purpose of bestowing on others the greatest of all benefits—the means of eternal salvation. It is universally allowed that love to our fellow creatures lays us under obligations, in many instances, to bestow our substance for their benefit. But a little attention must convince us that in no instance is that love so conspicuously manifested, as when we can contribute to send the gospel to those who are ignorant of it. If you had a remedy for restoring sight to the blind, would you not reckon yourself obliged, by the love of your neighbour, to communicate and apply it to persons labouring under that great calamity? But how much greater is the calamity of spiritual blindness! and how much more important is the gospel, which offers the only effectual relief! Did you see your fellow creature detained in bondage by his enemies, would you not reckon it incum-

bent on you to contribute for his ransom so as to procure him liberty? But the unenlightened nations are held in a more grievous bondage by the enemy of their salvation. They are under the influence of strong prejudices and violent passions, inconsistent both with their temporal and eternal happiness. Reflect seriously on the dark places of the earth which are full of the habitations of cruelty. Besides the slavery, and the sale of the human race, which are a reproach to countries professedly Christians, the murder of innocent children is there established by custom; human sacrifices are performed as acts of devotion; and cannibals devour one another to gratify their revenge.* Does not love to your neighbour imperiously command you to send those unhappy beings the gospel to emancipate them from the slavery of Satan, and to bring them into the liberty of the children of God? Are ye not, as Christians, bound in charity to deal your bread to the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to give lodging to the stranger? But how much greater is that charity in itself, how much more beneficial in its effects, which provides the bread of life for them who are ready to perish; which gives drink to the thirsty from the wells of salvation; which clothes the naked with the Redeemer's righteousness; and which brings those who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, to be fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God! (Eph. ii. 12, 19).

6. Christians are bound in justice to send the gospel to the heathen. Our fathers were heathens, and we,

* See the accounts published by the London Missionary Society of Otaheite and the Marquesas.

their posterity, had continued to be so had not Christians sent the gospel to our land. Now that we are Christians, it is incumbent on us to return the obligation received by sending the gospel to those who are heathens; at any rate to give of our substance for that important end. The argument of the Apostle concerning the contribution sent by the people of Achaia to the poor saints at Jerusalem will apply here: "It hath pleased them verily, and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things" (Romans xv. 27).

7. Self-interest should induce Christians to send the gospel to the heathen, that they may obtain the accomplishment of that promise, "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself" (Proverbs xi. 25). A concern for the salvation of the heathen may excite in us a more serious concern for our own salvation, and so may occasion a revival of real religion in our land. If we are anxious to communicate light to them that sit in darkness, we have reason to expect an increased measure of gospel light to ourselves; for we are assured that, in the latter days, together with an extensive diffusion, there shall be a superior degree of knowledge of divine things. "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold as the light of seven days" (Isaiah xxx. 26). "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah xi. 9).

If we are desirous to extend the consolations of religion to those who are strangers to them, we have reason to hope that our own souls shall partake of them

more abundantly. If we are willing to reach the bread of life to those who are ready to perish, we may be assured that the bountiful Father of the family will increase the provision of His household to all His children, and that "we shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of His house" (Psalms xxxvi. 8). Christian brethren, when we solicit your prayers, your counsels, your pecuniary aid, for sending the gospel to the heathen, "we desire not merely a gift to them, but we desire fruit that may abound to your account" (Philip. iv. 7).

III. I proceed now to remove some of the objections that may occur to a candid mind against sending missionaries to the heathen and other unenlightened nations.*

There are some who object to the measure of sending missionaries to the heathen who are not candid in the objections they offer. The real cause of their opposition is that they are strangers to the power of the gospel and therefore ignorant of its real value, and so, calculating like commercial men from their own views, they reckon it a worthless commodity unfit for exportation. As to such, let us pray that they may experience the power of the gospel and know its inestimable value to their own souls, for then we are sure that their objections against sending it to the heathen will vanish.

There are some who oppose the measure from a direct and deliberate enmity to the gospel. They feel it a

[* At this date the importance of Foreign Missions had not made its appeal to the Church of Scotland. One has only to read the famous debate in the Assembly of 1796 to realise this. See Hugh Miller's "Headship of Christ" for a graphic description of the debate.]

restraint on their irregular passions, and they would wish to extinguish it at home. They are outrageous at the thought of sending it abroad to restrain the liberty of those who live as free as nature dictates. Let us not be surprised at the opposition of such men. As there have always been, so there are still vile persons who speak villainy; who in heart work iniquity and utter error against the Lord. But as no human reasonings can rectify their errors, let us fervently pray that the Spirit of truth may lead them into all truth, and may effectually teach them their obligation to defend and promote the measure which they now so deliberately persecute.

But it must be allowed that there are others who have experienced the power of the gospel, and who know its value; who, instead of feeling enmity against it, are really desirous of its success: and who, notwithstanding, are averse to the measure of sending missionaries to the heathen.

1. Their first and great objection arises from the improbability of success. It will readily occur to them that the Society has no funds and no qualified missionaries. Could they find the missionaries, they have not the language of the nations to whom they are sent. Even if they had their language, the ignorance and savage rudeness of these nations, together with the passions, prejudices, and peculiar customs flowing from the savage character, form insurmountable barriers against every attempt of our Society to communicate to them a knowledge of the refined truths of the gospel. In answer to this objection let me caution you, my Christian brethren, against indulging the disposition of the slothful man who creates difficulties and dangers in

his own imagination, saying, "There is a lion in the way, a lion is in the streets" (Proverbs xxvi. 13). Let me remind you, that to teach the nations is God's command; to undertake the work is our duty; to render it effectual, He hath promised His presence. Are there difficulties which Almighty power cannot remove? Is there any work which His presence cannot accomplish? If the duty and the promise are clear, let us make the attempt, leaving the success in His hand who hath circumstances and events at His disposal. But on the supposition that our endeavours shall not convert the heathen, they may, notwithstanding, introduce some degree of civilization among them, and a knowledge of the general truths of religion as preparative to their future conversion. Though we may not turn the forest into a fruitful field, yet we may grub out briers and thorns and sow those seeds which in due time shall bring forth fruit abundantly. As the day of small privileges is not to be despised, so neither is the day of small attempts to be neglected. It is certain that the writings of Wickliff secretly operated on the minds of men for a century and a half, and at the end of that period had their influence, together with other causes, in bringing about the glorious Reformation. Though God in His mysterious providence should see it meet to deny any good to the heathen from our scheme of sending them missionaries, I doubt not that He will approve the design in us just as He approved David's intention of building the temple, though He did not permit him to perform the work, saying, "Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto My name, thou didst well, that it was in thine heart" (1 Kings viii. 18). Whatever, therefore, may be the success of our scheme, the end we

propose is liberal, the temporal loss we can sustain by the attempt is trifling, and gain to our souls is certain by procuring the approbation of our God.

2. Another objection will perhaps occur to a candid mind against the measure of sending missionaries to the heathen at present. It is that the time for the conversion of the heathen is not yet come, and that any attempts on our part are improper before the period which God hath appointed for it. In answer to this objection let me caution you to beware of incurring the reproof which God gives by the prophet Haggai to persons who offered a similar objection against building the temple. These people said, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." But God said by the prophet, "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?" (Haggai i. 2, 4), intimating that if they were equally desirous to build the house of God as they were to build houses for accommodating themselves or for gratifying their vanity, they would not reckon it unseasonable to begin the work. Again, however distant the period may be in which the kingdom of Christ shall be fully established in the world, in regard there shall be a gradual progress by the ordinary means towards that establishment; it is high time to begin to use the means by sending the gospel to the unenlightened nations. As the tenderness of the branches and the swelling of the bud in trees indicate the approach of summer, so there are circumstances in our time which indicate that the establishment of Christ's kingdom is near, and that the period is come in which Christians ought to use means for the advancement of it.

(1) There is in our times an ardent desire to penetrate into unknown countries from which results a knowledge of the several unenlightened nations of the earth superior to what was attained in former times, while the increase of commerce and of skill in navigation facilitates the intercourse betwixt us and them. This knowledge is designed by the sovereign Ruler to prepare the way for the heralds of the gospel in the latter days; hence it is given as a sign of the near approach of the Messiah's kingdom, "Many (says Daniel) shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Daniel xii. 4). If, therefore, we see the sign and know its meaning, we should join issue with the designs of Providence by sending missionaries to the unenlightened nations.

(2) There is in our days a spirit of association for generous purposes beyond what appeared in former times. Innumerable are the societies formed within this island for the purposes of bestowing on their fellow creatures an alleviation of, or a deliverance from the various calamities incident to human life. If a person forms a scheme which is apparently generous and practicable, he will immediately find many who will cheerfully give their aid to carry it into execution. Is not this a loud call to all who know the superior liberality of the scheme of redemption, who know it to be the only and the effectual remedy of all the miseries brought into the world by sin? Is it not to such persons, I say, a loud call to associate together for the purpose of sending the knowledge of this remedy to those who stand most in need of it?

(3) In our times societies have been already formed for the express purpose of sending missionaries to the

heathen, not only in various parts of our island, but likewise in Holland, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Switzerland, in several parts of America, and at the Cape of Good Hope. Are you not, as Christians, under equal obligations with them to advance the Redeemer's kingdom and to promote the interests of your fellow-men? You are, in many respects, under greater obligations at present. Some of the countries mentioned above are ravaged by the sword, others are desolated by the pestilence, and in others enormous exactions deprive the inhabitants of their wealth and substance as an overflowing flood sweeps away the fruits of the earth; whereas you hear the din of war at a distance and the pestilence cometh not nigh your dwelling, while your persons and property are effectually secured by a just and mild government. You ought, therefore, as persons not only made liberal by the grace of God in common with other Christians, but likewise as persons dealt with liberally by His providence beyond your fellow Christians—you ought, I say, to devise liberal things by sending the gospel to those who are ignorant of it.

Christ Lifted Up

BY THE

REV. CHARLES CALDER, FERINTOSH.*

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."—*John xii. 32.*

THE great design of the ministry of the gospel as declared to Paul by the heavenly vision, which so suddenly and graciously arrested him in his career of persecuting zeal, is to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the living God. Christ is the light of the world and the only way to the Father; it is therefore by leading men to Christ that the great object of our ministry can alone be fulfilled—that they can be brought to the enjoyment of true light, and restored to the image and favour of God. Thence, in pursuance of the divine commission which the holy Apostle had received, it was

* The Rev. Charles Calder was the grandson of "the great Mr Calder," Cawdor, and son of the Rev. James Calder, Croy, a noted minister of the gospel. He was no less eminent than his father. He had three sons—John, minister of Rosskeen; Hugh, who succeeded his father; and Charles, whom Dr Kennedy describes as the "celebrated minister of Ferintosh." Mr Charles Calder was one among a thousand. From the day of his ordination (12th May, 1774) until the day of his death in 1812 he exercised a gracious ministry in the parish that was to become renowned through the ministry of his famous successor, Dr Macdonald, the "Apostle of the North." The above sermon is taken from a booklet—"Three Sermons by the Rev. Charles Calder, Ferintosh"—issued in 1877 by the Rev. Malcolm MacGregor, Free Church minister, Ferintosh.

his devout resolution, as expressed by himself, writing to the Corinthians, to know nothing among them except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The doctrine of the Cross to be the power of God and the wisdom of God in winning sinners to Christ and salvation, he knew from happy experience, as well as from our Lord's declaration in our text, signifying by what death He should die: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." By a display of love so rich and amazing, our blessed Lord was now to lay a foundation for conquering the most stubborn hearts, and was to engage a multitude, which no man can number, of all ranks and all nations, to enlist with joy under the banner of the Cross. Though there be virtue enough in the blood of Christ to expiate the guilt of the whole world, and attractive power in His dying love, sufficient to draw to Him every heart, and though we have a warrant to preach the gospel to every creature: yet we know of the many thus called that but few are chosen, and that of those to whom the word of this salvation is sent many perish in their sins: "For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. vii. 13, 14). As Christ was of old to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, so He is still, alas! despised and rejected by many to their own aggravated condemnation and eternal ruin. The benefits, however, of His death are offered unto all, and by the preaching of the Cross a glorious church shall be gathered unto Him out of the Gentile as well as the Jewish world, out of every kindred, people, and nation—of all languages, ages, and conditions:

"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

I propose in discoursing from these words, in dependence upon divine aid, to show wherein lies the attractive influence of the Cross of Christ, by illustrating those views of His death, from the representation of which, in the preaching of the gospel and through the accompanying influences of the divine Spirit, the great end of our ministry may be accomplished, and sinners effectually drawn to Christ and salvation. In order to the accomplishment of this important object, and that men may be brought to experience the powerful magnetism of the Cross of Christ, it is necessary to represent to them:

1. The divine glory of Him who was lifted up upon the Cross. Little indeed is the portion which we can comprehend of the infinite glory of our Redeemer, before whom Isaiah in his vision of the upper world, beheld the highest orders of celestials, veiling their faces with their wings, and worshipping Him with the most profound reverence; and of whom, rapt into the vision of future times, he cries out in holy ecstasy, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah ix. 6). Had it been only a mere man, a creature though of the most exalted rank, who had condescended to suffer and die for us, whatever admiration and praise such friendship might excite, it could afford us no solid consolation, as it could be of no avail to expiate the guilt of sin, or to obtain for us eternal redemption. The redemption

of the soul was precious, and it must have ceased for ever, had not a ransom of infinite worth been provided, adequate indeed to the redemption of a multitude which no man can number, and each soul of that multitude incomparably more valuable in His estimation, who best knew its worth, than the whole world. Adequate to such a redemption was the price by which it hath been purchased: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28). "Feed the Church of God," says Paul to the elders of Ephesus, "which He has purchased with His own blood." That one of such infinite dignity should humble Himself thus, and shed His blood on a cross for the salvation of men, is altogether wonderful and mysterious, and is a doctrine, therefore, which corrupt reason is ever ready to reject as false and absurd. But he that believes that there is a God must believe mysteries, and in the eye of sound reason, nothing can appear more arrogant than for a man to pretend to search out the Almighty unto perfection, and obstinately to reject the clear and express revelation which Jehovah hath made to us of His nature or of His ways, because they are incomprehensible to the poor grovelling creature who is a mystery to himself, and can no more account for the union of soul and body —two substances, yet one person—than he can comprehend a subject infinitely removed beyond the narrow ken of the human understanding—this great mystery of godliness, the manifestation of God in the flesh.

That our glorious Redeemer is God as well as man is a most comfortable truth, of which we have the fullest and clearest evidence from the Word of God. "Without controversy," says Paul, writing to Timothy in the

passage just alluded to (1 Timothy iii. 16), "great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." And in his Epistle to the Philippians, ii. 6, speaking of Christ, he says: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." If the heavens declare the glory of the Lord and the firmament showeth His handy work—if the vast creation bears the stamp of an almighty agent; if the Cherubim and Seraphim that shine around the throne of God proclaim that the hand that made them is divine, then this honour is due to Christ: "For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" (Col. i. 16, 17). Again, He is expressly styled "the Beginning and the End" (Rev. xxii. 13); the Beginning, that is the efficient cause from which all things proceed; and the End, that is the final cause to which all things are referred; and nothing higher can be said of God the Father. It is this infinite dignity of Christ that imparts infinite worth to His obedience, and sufferings, and gives virtue and efficacy to His sacrifice, which the sufferings of the whole human race would not have, if they had been doomed to everlasting punishment.

This transcendent glory of Christ imparts infinitely attractive virtue to His Cross. He who humbled Himself for our sakes was higher than the heavens; He who

emptied Himself had the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Him bodily; He who endured the Cross, despising the shame, was that great and glorious Being whom highest angels worship and adore. His humiliation, His poverty, His shame and sufferings, have, therefore, not only infinite merit in them to expiate the evil of sin and satisfy divine justice, but likewise an infinite virtue to bring nigh those who were far off, and to draw unto Him the remotest wanderers—sinners from the utmost ends of the earth, yea, from the very confines of hell. "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else; besides Me there is no Saviour" (Isaiah xlv. 21, 22). This is Christ's call to us in His word. The great business then of ministers of the gospel is to publish and urge this gracious call, and to direct perishing sinners to Him as the great God, and the Saviour lifted up upon the Cross, to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye, through His poverty, might be rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9). The knowledge of this grace, which can never be fully comprehended, which angels contemplate with wonder, and which the redeemed of the Lord shall celebrate in eternal halleluiahs of praise; the knowledge and admiration of this grace must be proportionate to the views which the soul has got of His glory, who humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It is by the display of Christ's glory that the grace manifested in His humiliation and sufferings is illustrated, and its attractive influence comes to be experienced. In preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, when accompanied by the influences of the divine Spirit,

whose peculiar office is to testify of Christ, and to glorify Him, a powerful and irresistible attraction is felt flowing from the grace and condescendence which brought the only Begotten of the Father to become an outcast of men, and the Lord of life and glory to expire on a cross for the salvation of sinners and enemies.

Christ is "the desire of all nations"; it was said of Him in prophecy that the Gentiles should come to His light, and kings to the brightness of His rising; and when He is set forth in the preaching of the gospel as the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person, voluntarily substituting Himself in our room, submitting to the curse which we had incurred, and pouring out His soul unto death on the accursed tree for wretched sinful men, such ineffable glory united with such astonishing grace, viewed in the light of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, overcomes man's natural alienation of heart from God, converts enemies of the Cross into faithful followers of the Lamb—renders a crucified Saviour altogether lovely, altogether desirable in the eyes of His people—worthy that kings should fall down before Him, and that all nations of the earth should serve Him. "I will now turn aside," said Moses, "to see this great sight, the bush burning and not consumed." It is by the representation of the glory and of the goodwill of Him who dwelt in the bush that thoughtless perishing sinners will be induced to turn aside from the downward paths of sin and folly, to contemplate this astonishing sight, the Son of God in our nature lifted up upon a Cross, till by the view their hearts are melted, won, and drawn, till they are brought to enlist under the banner of the Cross, and to say with Paul, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross

of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world" (Gal. vi. 14).

II. That sinners may be effectually drawn to Christ, it is necessary to represent to them the evil and the danger of sin as manifested in the Cross of Christ. It was part of God's commission to the prophet (Ezekiel iii. 17, 18), "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from Me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand." That the sinner's life may be saved, or the watchman acquitted of his blood, sin must be laid faithfully before him in its native deformity and malignity, in its fatal consequences and dreadful desert; as that accursed thing which God's soul hates, and against which He has denounced indignation and wrath, tribulation and eternal anguish. Though much of the pernicious nature of sin may be learned from the woes without number under which the creation groans, yet none of its dismal consequences alone, nor all of them united, set its evil and danger in so awful a light as the Cross of Christ. The dying groans of the Son of God declare this more loudly than the wailings of the damned. How atrocious must that guilt be which nothing but the costly sacrifice of the Lamb of God could expiate. How deep the stain which nothing but the blood of God could efface. When Christ is held forth in the preaching of the gospel as lifted up upon a Cross, and when sin is viewed as the procuring cause of all His sufferings and

sorrows; of the bloody agony and ignominious death of the Prince of Life, the Lord of Glory, how must the conscience-stricken sinner shrink with horror and tremble for his own fate!

Seeing thus in the glass of Christ's sufferings, and by the light of the divine Spirit, what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, and reflecting with himself, "If these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" he is brought to listen with eager attention to the offers of salvation through Christ, and to fly as if he heard the footsteps of the avenger of blood behind him, to lay hold of the hope set before him in the gospel. As there is no sanctuary for the sinner, no place of security from the wrath that is to come but the Cross of Christ, so there is no other point of view from which sin appears so exceedingly sinful, so much the object of God's detestation, and so contrary to His divine nature. The soul, therefore, to whom sin has been discovered in this light must be deeply convinced of their fatal error who hope for salvation whilst they indulge themselves in the practice of sin, and must feel drawn to Christ no less powerfully to obtain redemption from sin than to obtain deliverance from wrath. As the children of Israel, when stung by the fiery serpents in the wilderness, looked for healing to the brazen serpent elevated by the divine appointment on a pole, so it is by the faithful representation of the evil and danger of sin as manifested in the sufferings of the Son of God, that the sinner is led to look with eagerness to Christ lifted up upon the cross for the healing of the nations, and to apply to Him for remedy from the malignant poison of the old serpent by which his nature has been tainted, with no less ardour than he repairs to

Him as his hiding place from the wind, and his covert from the tempest of the divine wrath, or as the high tower to which the righteous flee and are safe. But

III. What gives peculiar attraction to the Cross of Christ, and communicates to it the most powerful influence in bringing nigh those that were far off, is the love therein manifested to the sinful, perishing children of men. Much of the goodness of God may be seen by an enlightened eye in creation, much in His providential care over His creatures; but it is in the Cross of Christ that the glory of divine love has been most eminently displayed, and shines forth with a lustre surpassing all wonder and praise. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends: but Christ hath recommended His love to us, in that, while we were sinners and enemies, He died for us. He hath recommended His love in submitting for such not only to the tortures of crucifixion to be lifted up as a spectacle of ignominy and woe on the accursed tree, but in submitting to sufferings of a nature far more exquisite, to the hiding of His Father's face and to the unknown sorrow of soul-suffering, which threw Him into sore amazement and a bloody sweat, which extorted from Him strong crying and tears, and made Him, though silent as a sheep before her shearers, amidst all the cruelties and indignities He met with from men, to pour out, in the anguish of His soul, that bitter complaint, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Oh! what manner of love was this! Oh! the height and the depth, the breadth and the length, of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge! If we conceive of Christ lifted up upon the Cross, and addressing us in the

pathetic exclamation of the prophet Jeremiah, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow?" Must we not reply with admiration and gratitude, No, Lord, never was sorrow like unto thy sorrow; never was love like unto thy love? And how must admiration of this love be heightened; how powerful must its attractive influence be felt, from the believing contemplation of the holy alacrity with which our blessed Lord, knowing all things that were to come upon Him, went forth to surrender Himself to these tremendous sufferings, and of the wonderful meekness, the patience, the constancy, and the willingness with which He persevered in the dreadful conflict! He failed not, nor was He discouraged till He brought forth judgment unto victory, and, having power over His own life to reserve it, or lay it down when He pleased, yet He did not save Himself, because He would save others; nor did He yield up the ghost till He had drunk out the dregs of the cup of wrath, till He could pronounce, "It is finished"—till He had paid His people's full ransom, and obtained for them redemption and everlasting salvation.

Christ is, therefore, to be held forth in the preaching of the gospel as voluntarily submitting to be lifted up upon the Cross; He is to be represented there in His dyed garments and red apparel, wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; His pierced bleeding heart panting with desire for the salvation of sinners; His blessed arms extended wide to invite and welcome them into this glorious sanctuary, that by the powerful magnetism of His dying love their hearts may be won to Him, and aliens converted, in the day of His power, into fellow-citizens with the saints, and strangers

and foreigners into faithful members of the household of God. Christ is thus to be held forth in the preaching of the glorious gospel as lifted up upon the Cross, and as addressing perishing sinners in the tender, affectionate strain of Joseph to his brethren: "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt, come near unto me, I pray you"; so that, drawn by the cords of this mighty love, and by these bands of a man, His seed, as foretold by Isaiah, may be brought from the east and gathered from the west, and the north may give up, and the south keep not back; that His sons may be brought from far, and His daughters from the ends of the earth; and that they may be seen flying to Him as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows, seeking Jesus who was crucified, and asking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, "Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." "Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse." "Hosannah! to the Son of David, blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosannah! in the highest."

IV. The harmony of the divine attributes, as displayed in the Cross, has a powerful influence in drawing sinners to Christ, and encouraging their approaches to God through Him. To reconcile the seemingly opposite interests of justice and mercy in the salvation of sinners, must, to us, have forever appeared impossible. But in the Cross of Christ, the incomprehensible wisdom of God has revealed a method for the accomplishment of this infinitely important object; a method which excites the wonder and animates the praises of the blest above; a method from which glory arises to God in the highest—

peace on earth and good will to the children of men; a method by which the glory of God's justice and holiness is reconciled to the amplest exercise of His mercy and love, in the eternal salvation of the guilty, humbled sinner. It were easy to conceive of God's righteousness declared in the punishment of sin; it is the Cross of Christ alone that declares His righteousness in the remission of sin. It manifests justice in the way of pardoning sin, and mercy in the way of punishing it. In the sufferings of a Surety of such infinite dignity, the justice of God is more awfully displayed than if the whole human race had been doomed to everlasting destruction, and mercy at the same time shines forth in a more amiable way than if justice had been entirely dispensed with, and sin left altogether unpunished. Here, then, spotless justice, inviolable truth, infinite mercy, and love shine all at once; none of them obscures the other; each gives lustre to the rest; they mingle their beams, and shine forth with united and eternal splendour, as David speaks: "Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other" (Psalm lxxxv. 10). Mercy and peace must have been ever inclined to serve man, but truth exacted the performance of God's threatening, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," and righteousness could not but give to every one his due. God must be true in all His ways, and righteous in all His works.

Now Christ is to be set forth in the preaching of the gospel as lifted up upon the Cross, satisfying the demands of all these claimants, restoring union between them, and showing, in His death, how God's Word can be true and His work just, and the sinner notwithstanding find mercy and obtain peace. Is the sinner convinced of his

obnoxiousness to the stroke of divine justice, how attractive in this view is the Cross of Christ, and with what joy must he welcome the call to repair thither. Contemplating from thence stern justice and soft smiling mercy (as an illustrious writer expresses it) in perfect accord, supporting in full majesty the throne of God; hearing from thence the justice of God calling for grace, mercy, and peace to be multiplied to the penitent believer in Jesus, must he not, in holy wonder, cry out, "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it"? Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of thine heritage, who retainest not thine anger for ever, because thou delightest in mercy? "Oh! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out."

V. That sinners may be brought to experience the attractive influence of the Cross of Christ it is necessary to represent the victory obtained thereby over all the powers of darkness and the enemies of our salvation. It was on the Cross that the seed of the woman bruised the head of the serpent. It was by His death that Christ destroyed him who had the power of death, that is the devil. By the expiation of guilt on the Cross, He disarmed death of his formidable sting, and spoiled the powers of darkness of the trophies they had gained, by drawing man into their own apostasy, and subjecting to themselves this part of God's rational creation. Accordingly, says Christ, in the verse preceding our text, speaking of the death He was about to accomplish: "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince

of this world be cast out." When He made His soul an offering for sin, and laid down His life on the Cross, as a ransom for many, not only did He overcome the world with all its terrors, but trampled on death and hell, and on sin, the author of both; expelled Satan from the the empire which he had so long usurped over the minds of men, and took the prey from the mighty, and delivered the lawful captive. It is through manifold tribulations that we must enter into the kingdom of heaven. The enmity betwixt the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent never ceases; those whom Christ hath chosen out of the world, the world will hate. Satan desires to have them that he may sift them as wheat, and still goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

To the soul enlightened to see its danger, and ready to be oppressed with fear and sorrow from such a host of spiritual foes, how attractive must the Cross appear, when Christ, by the preaching of the gospel, is there represented to the eye of faith, in His dyed garments, and in the greatness of His strength, wresting by His pierced hand the keys of death and hell from Satan's possession, and trampling with His bruised feet all the enemies of God's glory and of our salvation; making a show of them openly, and triumphing over them on the Cross, and by His victory securing victory to all His faithful followers. For they also shall overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the power of His grace, and turn out conquerors at length, and more than conquerors through Him that loved them.

We are, therefore, in the preaching of the gospel, to direct the afflicted in the world, for comfort, to the Cross of Christ, and to bid them possess their souls in patience,

whilst they hear His gracious saying, "My kingdom is not of this world." "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world, and in me ye shall have peace." Those tossed by the tempests of temptation, we are to guide thither for rest, and we bid them dismiss their fears, while they view the glorious Captain of their salvation leading captivity captive, and thereby giving them the assured hope that the God of Peace shall shortly bruise Satan underneath their feet also.

The bowed down under a sense of guilt we are to lead to the same blessed resting place, that they may lift up their heads and behold with joy the Man of God's right hand, who is mighty to save, taking away the sin of the world by the sacrifice of Himself, bearing it into a land not inhabited; so that when the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for there shall be none, and when the sins of Judah shall be sought for they shall not be found. It is by exhibiting thus the glorious conquests of the Cross, and proclaiming there liberty for the captives, and comfort to all that mourn, that the outcasts of Israel shall be assembled and brought nigh, and the dispersed of Judah gathered into one: that the weary soul shall be satiated, and the sorrowful soul replenished with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And in that day, as the Prophet Isaiah speaks, "There shall be a Root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and His rest shall be glorious" (Isa. xi. 10).

VI. That sinners may effectually be drawn to Christ, we must lay before them the inestimable purchase of the Cross. Of the glorious blessings which Christ hath pur-

chased by His death, and now dispenses in the most gratuitous manner, little indeed of the value can be conceived or uttered by us. To the redeemed of the Lord they shall be the subject of eternal wonder and praise. The Apostle Paul tells us that He made peace by the blood of His Cross, that he submitted to that accursed death, "that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles that we should receive the promise of the Spirit through faith"; and that He entered in once by His own blood into the holiest of all, having obtained for us eternal redemption. Christ is, therefore, in the preaching of the gospel to be represented as lifted up upon the Cross, purchasing for the rebellious peace and reconciliation with God, the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. How attractive in this view must the Cross of Christ appear! How suited to man's wretched condition by nature are those blessings for which He there shed His precious blood! and how graciously calculated to satisfy and solace an immortal spirit formed originally for God and eternity. The Scriptures of truth represent man by nature as in a state of enmity and rebellion against God: as enemies to God in their minds and by wicked works. The soul convinced of the misery of such a state, and trembling under a sense of its danger from hearing as from the mount covered with tempest and that burned with fire, that awful denunciation: "Let the potsherds of the earth strive with the potsherds of the earth; but woe to the man that striveth with his Maker." Such we are to direct to Mount Calvary, there to behold the Son of God pouring out His soul unto death; there to hear His blood speaking better things than the blood of Abel; speaking in a

voice the sweetest and loudest in the world, louder than the thunder of Sinai; a voice that reacheth heaven and earth, pleading with God in behalf of men, and beseeching men to be reconciled to God; a voice more melodious to the self-condemned penitent than the sound of the jubilee trumpet to the captive and oppressed Israelite of old; a voice that turneth into a heavenly calm the tempest of the troubled soul, that diffuseth into the contrite heart a joy with which strangers shall not intermeddle, and a peace that passeth all understanding.

The Scriptures again represent our condition by nature as without God in the world, not having the Spirit nor the fruits of the Spirit, without light, without hope, without joy; like the earth in the beginning, till the Spirit of God moved on the face of the deep; without form and void, and overspread with darkness. The soul brought to feel and lament the misery and wretchedness of such a state we are to direct to the Cross of Christ, that he may behold Him there purchasing the gifts of the Holy Spirit without measure, and that he may behold Him now, exalted at the right hand of God, in virtue of His obedience unto death; in order that from a throne of grace on high He might breathe on the spiritually dead, and say unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost"; that He might thus form them into living temples, into an habitation of God through the Spirit; and fill them with hope, and light, and joy in believing, that out of His fulness He might communicate to them grace for grace; that unction from the Holy One which teacheth all things, and those consolations of His Spirit which can make His people to rejoice even in the midst of tribulations.

We are all by nature children of wrath, and liable to that eternal death which God in His Word has declared to be the just wages of sin. To the soul trembling under that conviction, and crying out with the awakened jailor of old, "What shall I do to be saved?" how reviving the tidings of the gospel, the glorious doctrine of the Cross, when Christ is there represented to the eye of faith suffering, the just for the unjust, that He might bring sinners unto God, not only to deliver them from the wrath that is to come, but likewise to consecrate for them, by the rending of the vail of His flesh, a new and living way into the Holiest of all: to the possession of an inheritance eternal in the heavens. With what holy ardour must such sinners welcome and obey the call to view the blessed and divine Redeemer wearing a crown of thorns to purchase for them a crown of glory! to hear Him saying as from the cross, "I lay down my life for my sheep, I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any be able to pluck them out of my hands." In my Father's house are many mansions, and I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am there ye may be also. Christ is called the Prince of Peace. With reference to Him it was said in prophecy, that the gathering of the people should be unto Shiloh. When He is represented in the preaching of the gospel as lifted up betwixt heaven and earth, to make peace between both, His precious blood streaming forth from His sacred mangled body, and the waters of life, oceans of spiritual and eternal blessings, issuing freely from the same source, for the guilty and perishing children of men; it is thus they shall be brought to enlist with joy under the banner of the Cross, and that the children of God, scattered abroad, shall be gathered together into

one, and come to be blessed in Him, and to call Him blessed; of whom it was foretold that in Him all the kindreds of the earth should be blessed.

I shall not trespass on your patience by any application of this subject further than just to observe, that from the faint imperfect view laid before you of the attractive influence of the Cross of Christ we may learn with what a rich variety of motives the doctrine of the Cross furnishes the minister of the gospel, to urge and encourage sinners to repair to Christ for salvation, and the obligation resulting from thence on him to determine, with Paul, on making Christ crucified the chief subject of his discourses. And having the grace given him of God to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, and knowing that, with regard to one and all of those to whom he is sent with a message of salvation, it must prove either the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death; must he not cry out, Who is sufficient for these things? But our sufficiency is of God, who hath committed the treasure of the gospel to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us; and whose encouraging declaration to His faithful servants is, "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

The Everlasting Covenant

BY THE

Rev. ALEXANDER STEWART, D.D., Dingwall.*

"Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow."—*2 Samuel xxiii. 5.*

David, from his earlier days to the close of his long and varied life, was visited with many and painful afflictions. Like Him whom in spirit he called Lord, though descended of David after the flesh, he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. But sanctified affliction produces godly sorrow, and godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation. Of this, David was a most conspicuous and instructive example. From his youth he was taught to know and worship the Lord God of Israel. After he was taken from the sheep-fold, and

* Alexander Stewart, minister of Moulin, Perthshire, began his ministry as an unconverted man. It was chiefly through the instrumentality of Charles Simeon that he was brought to have clear views of the gospel. After his conversion there was a manifest change in his preaching. This was followed by a notable revival of religion. The concern manifested itself chiefly among the younger people. A series of sermons on regeneration were instrumental in bringing about a more general religious awakening. In 1805 he was translated to Dingwall, and in 1820 to the Gaelic Chapel, Edinburgh. Mr Stewart was a distinguished Gaelic scholar. He died in Edinburgh in March, 1821, aged fifty-seven years.

brought to feed Jacob, and rule over Israel, new temptations beset him; iniquities, according to his own sorrowful confession, did at times prevail against him, and his falls were grievous. But the Lord had chosen him for a servant, therefore He did not leave him to perish in his sin. This sweet Psalmist of Israel was reclaimed from the error of his way; and after wiping off his penitential tears, he again tuned his sacred harp to the praises of his own great Shepherd, who had restored his soul, and had led him anew in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. From the manifold mercies of God to his soul, experienced through the whole course of his diversified life, David possessed an assured confidence that the Lord had established His covenant with him, that the God of Jacob was his everlasting portion, that He would never fail him nor forsake him, and that He would build up his throne and establish his seed to many generations. Notwithstanding this assurance, many of his troubles still remained, impaired his comfort, and broke the peace of his family. His children had in many things grieved his heart; his enemies perpetually harassed him; and, especially, in his own soul he did not find his desires and expectations accomplished, nor spiritual grace growing up to that maturity which formed a most valuable part of the promise in the covenant of his salvation.

Here we have an example of a case common to those who have been led through mercy to lay hold on the covenant of life, established through the Son of David, the great Mediator. A believer has apprehended and laid hold of this covenant; he knows it is all his salvation, he feels it is all his desire, yet he has to mourn his shortcomings and the disappointment of his hopes in

some of those points which he believes to be most infallibly secured by that very covenant. This is a case that calls for tender treatment; and while we would humbly endeavour to state the believer's views of the covenant and his experience in connection with those views, let us earnestly implore the presence and blessing of Him whose commission to His servants is still the same as ever, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."

I. We shall state the believer's views of the covenant. Having searched the Scriptures which testify of Christ, and having been led by the Spirit to the knowledge and love of the truth, the believer perceives that the covenant of his salvation is indeed an "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."

1. He sees the perfections of God illustriously displayed. (1) His justice is satisfied by the perfect obedience and sufferings of His own Son in the human nature, who thus paid the full penalty of man's transgression and wrought out a complete righteousness adequate to the demands of the perfect law of God. (2) His mercy is gloriously manifested in freely bestowing a full pardon and even conferring the highest honours on sinners, rebels, outcasts, who deserved nothing but to be consigned to "the blackness of darkness" for ever. (3) His sovereignty is maintained in "doing what he will with his own"; in choosing, according to the unerring counsel of His will, the objects of His special favour; and dispensing to these such measures of His grace and His bounty as appear good in His sight whose dominion is over all, and who "giveth not account of any of his matters." (4) His truth is vindicated in fulfilling His unchangeable word that the

wages of sin is death, that, without due expiation, He will not clear the guilty, that nothing unclean shall enter into the holy Jerusalem above, that though heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law till all be fulfilled; all which is completely accomplished in the meritorious work of the great Redeemer and in the sanctifying operations of the Divine Spirit on the soul of a penitent sinner. Thus the honour of the divine government is secured and all the intelligent world is made to know and acknowledge that the righteous Jehovah loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity. The believer, contemplating the wonders of redeeming love, admires and glories in that covenant by which mercy and truth thus meet and shine forth together.

2. He sees the salvation of the penitent sinner fully secured. Abundant provision is made for the sinner's deliverance from the penalty of the law, seeing Christ hath redeemed him from the curse of the law "by being made a curse for him" (Gal. iii. 13). Abundant provision is made for the sanctification of his depraved nature "by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost shed on him abundantly through Jesus Christ his Saviour." Strength, wisdom, and courage, together with "the whole armour of God," are supplied to bear him through his spiritual warfare; light to guide him in his pilgrimage, consolation and support in time of trouble. Nor is temporal safety and provision wanting; "his place of defence is the munition of rocks; bread also is given him; his water shall be sure." He sees the Lord at once a sun and a shield to His people: "Christ made unto them wisdom, and

righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." And he foresees the final complete glorification of his soul and body in that bright world where there shall be no more sin nor curse, no more night, no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor pain; where the ransomed of the Lord shall live and reign with Him for ever and ever.

3. The believer sees the subordinate provisions of the covenant well ordered in all things. The Bible, the deed or instrument which contains the covenant, is preserved entire, is published abroad to the world, is translated, or translating into all languages and disseminated through all lands so that people of all nations and kindreds and languages may hear in their own tongues the wonderful works of God. Messengers are selected and appointed, are equipped and sent forth, to make known the precious contents of the Bible, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Particular ordinances are appointed as seals or conveyances of the blessings of the covenant and administered in the churches to those who lawfully claim the benefit of them. Various dispensations of Providence, some of a prosperous, some of an adverse nature, directed by the Author of the covenant, serve to display the wisdom of its constitution, the suitableness and certainty of its promises, and the abundance of its resources. He sees these things further confirmed by the experience of those on the one hand who have embraced the covenant, and on the other of those who have rejected it. While he sees Christ crucified becoming a stumbling-block to the unbelieving Jews and foolishness to the philosophic Greeks, yet he sees that to them who are called both

Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. i. 23, 24).

4. The believer sees the stability and perpetuity of the covenant insured by the immutable character of the parties engaged. The Father has promised to the Son that "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand"; "that he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied." The Son undertakes and performs: "I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; those whom thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." The Holy Spirit also undertakes and carries on His work in the hearts of those whom Jesus has ransomed till He has sanctified them wholly and presented them without spot or blemish. None of these parties can fail; the word of Him who cannot lie is passed. As if this were of itself insufficient to satisfy men slow of heart to believe He hath added His oath; and because He could swear by no greater He hath sworn by Himself, that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, His word and His oath, the blessings of the unchangeable covenant might be confirmed for ever to believers. Mercies thus unalterably secured may well be called "the sure mercies of David." They cannot be exhausted; the source from which they flow cannot fail; they are like the pure river of the water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and flowing for ever and ever. The Lord takes pleasure in repeating in His own person the assurance of the endless continuance of His loving-kindness toward His chosen: "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee,

neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Isaiah liv. 10).

Having thus stated the views which the believer is taught to form and habitually to entertain of the covenant of his salvation we shall now enquire: II. What is his experience in connection with those views?

While the believer's faith is lively and his views of the provisions and blessings of the covenant are clear, he rejoices in them as "all his salvation and all his desire." He knows there is salvation in none else; that in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of the mountains; that in the Lord alone is the salvation of Israel (Jer. iii. 23). He does not wish for it in any other way than this which is so honourable to God and so secure to the sinner. His chief desire is to become a full partaker of this salvation and to glorify God by a life and conversation becoming this glorious scheme of redemption. But here he has at times to mourn a sore disappointment. The Lord does not always grant him his heart's desire in the manner and season and measure that he expected. He desires to be spiritually-minded, to be raised above the world, to have his affections set on things above, to be wholly resigned to his Lord's will and able to say in all things, "Not my will, but thine be done," to have his whole temper and spirit conformed to the pattern of his Master's spirit, seeking to have the same mind which was in Christ, and to learn of Him to be meek and lowly in heart. In endeavouring to attain this blessed temper, he does not trust to his own powers; if he did, his failure would be no wonder; but he has respect to the covenant and looks to its promises: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn

away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me" (Jer. xxxii. 40). Notwithstanding this, he often finds reason to complain that "iniquities prevail against him"; that backwardness to duty, discontent with his portion, or with something in his lot, impatience of temper, worldliness of spirit, distrust in providence are often working in his heart; though to will be present with him, yet how to perform that which is good he finds not; though he delights in the law of God after the inward man, yet he finds a law, that when he would do good, evil is present with him (Romans vi. 18), etc. While the everlasting covenant is all his salvation and his desire, his confidence and delight, still a body of sin, a body of death is his burden and his grief.

The believer desires to be fitted for his divine Master's service; to be more fervent in spirit, more active, and more successful in any work in which he is employed; to be more fruitful in every good word and work; and thus to glorify God in his body and spirit. In his hopes of attaining to fruitfulness he does not depend on his own exertions as if they alone were sufficient though he knows they are required, but he looks to the provisions of the covenant and thence draws his encouragement to labour and exertion. "I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. From me is thy fruit found" (Hos. xiv. 5), etc. "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." But neither doth this grow with him according to his desires and his hopes; he still finds, to his grief and mortification, daily cause to accuse himself of sloth and barrenness, to lament his leanness and unprofitableness:

that after all his flattering hopes of making a fair and fruitful show and accomplishing a great deal, he is little else than an unprofitable servant, an unfruitful cumberer of the ground.

The believer having tasted that the Lord is gracious and experienced the sweetness of communion with Him desires to have constant fellowship with his heavenly Father and with his Son Jesus Christ; to be daily beholding the beauty of the Lord and drawing water out of the wells of salvation, and so to have a continual joy and peace in believing. And in this point also, he has respect to the covenant; he remembers the words of his Lord: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John xv. 11). "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (xvi. 24). But here, too, he is often sorely disappointed. Temptations arise and his faith is clouded—his prayers are hindered—his communion with God is disturbed or interrupted, his hopes are overcast, his joy is changed into sorrow and mourning.

He desires to see his own house and the household of faith flourishing. With respect to his children he can call God to witness that He has no higher wish, no greater joy, than to see that his children walk in the truth; and whatever be their lot in the world, that they may have their portion with God's people. So also for his brethren in Christ, his heart's desire and prayer is, that their souls may prosper, that their light may shine, that the interests of Christ's kingdom may be advanced, and that the children of Zion may be joyful in their King. In breathing out these desires he takes encouragement from the promises of the covenant,

"Behold, thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion, and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life; yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel" (Psalms cxxviii. 4, 5, 6). In this case, too, he has to mourn at times the disappointment of his fair expectations. A darling Benjamin is forced away from his father's embraces, a favourite Joseph is, perhaps, torn by a wild beast, an accomplished Absalom becomes an undutiful rebellious son, and a Hophni or Phinehas, though well educated and in the priests's office, become abandoned to vice and almost break their father's heart. "His house is not so with God" as he wished and hoped, and this is a cause of sore lamentation. Neither does he see the Church of Christ prospering in his land and in his day. Lukewarmness prevails, the love of many waxes cold, the godly man faileth and is taken away from the evil to come, the godly pastor who fed the Lord's little flock in the wilderness is called home and the babes and sucklings are prematurely weaned from the breast. When the pillars of the Church, the champions of the faith are removed, irreligion and profanity become bold, and the pious remnant seek for shelter in private retirements; they enter into their chambers and shut the doors about them; they hide themselves for a moment until the indignation be overpast (Isaiah xxvi. 20). The zealous believer sees with grief and indignation the cross of Christ despised and the enemies of the cross lifting their heads with daring confidence. Alas! he cries, "Is the Lord's hand shortened that it cannot save or His ear heavy that it cannot hear?" When his enemies rage and make a noise even in the house of the Lord (Lam.

ii. 7), where is the Lord God of Elijah? where is the promise of His coming? "Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? Hath thy soul loathed Zion? We look for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble" (Jer. xiv. 19).

Thus does the believer often complain and mourn that his desire is not yet fulfilled, that "the Lord maketh it not to grow." Instead of advancing he suspects himself to be losing ground. He is reaching forth, indeed, to the things which are before; but the more he reaches and lifts his eyes he only sees the greater length before him and finds that perfection is the farther off. He is almost ready to faint and give over "because of the way." For a moment he is tempted to doubt the sufficiency and stability of the covenant, but his faith is strengthened and he dares not doubt. He is ready, however, to doubt his own interest in the covenant and to think that his iniquities have separated between him and his God, and that his sins have hid the Lord's face from him that he will not hear (Isaiah lix. 2). This hangs heavy on his soul and makes him go mournfully from day to day.

Let us endeavour to address to a mourner in this situation:

1. A word of encouragement. The case calls for encouragement and comfort. Although a believer should be left for a time under sorrow and discouragement, yet it is not the will of their heavenly Father that one of these little ones should perish. His command to his ministering messengers concerning such is still, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." Consider the promises applicable to your own particular situation.

(1) You complain of carnality, backwardness, coldness of affection, besetting and indwelling sins defiling your soul, hindering or corrupting your duties, marring your comforts and still drawing your heart from God, or hiding from you the light of His countenance. But the Lord assures you that in time all that you complain of shall be purged away: "I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin" (Isaiah i. 25). "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you" (Ezek. xxxvi. 25). Paul complained as you do now: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" But he found comfort at hand, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans vii. 24, 25).

(2) You complain of unfruitfulness: that your own graces do not grow; that you are not profitable to others; that, instead of glorifying God with your body and spirit, you rather dishonour Him by a barren profession and a useless life; that you are cumbering the ground and only fit to be cut down and cast forth as a withered branch. But O! thou self-accusing mourner, hear the word of the Lord: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground"; "I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out" (Isaiah xliv. 3; Zeph. iii. 19). "They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine," for "from me is thy fruit found" (Hos. xiv. 7, 8).

(3) You complain of want of communion with God; that you have lost the cheering fellowship you once enjoyed with Him in His ordinances; you "go forward,

but He is not there, and backward, but you cannot perceive Him." You fear that the Lord hath cast you off; that His mercy is gone for ever; that even His promise doth fail for evermore. But hearken, O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted, the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and what doth He say? "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee; in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer" (Isaiah liv. 6, 7, 11). "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them; I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water" (Isaiah xli. 17, 18).

(4) You complain of the want of grace and piety in your family or in the church; and you ask with painful longing, when will salvation come to your house? "Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?" (Psalms lxxxv. 6). But you may still take to yourself and plead the promise made to the church of old, "I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit on thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; and all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isaiah xliv. 3, 4; liv. 13). Behold, and read; hear, and understand; ask, and plead, and be not faithless but believing; and thou shalt yet see the glory of God!

Consider your own past experience. Recollect how it fared at times with your bodily health when you said with Hezekiah, "I shall go to the gates of the grave, I am deprived of the residue of my years." Notwithstanding your apprehensions the Lord stretched out His hand and healed you and bade you live, so that you cried out with the same pious king, "What will I say? He hath both spoken unto me and Himself hath done it." Doth God take care for the body? Doth He take care for the beast of the field which He hath made? And will He not much more care for the soul which He hath redeemed? Will He not heal your spiritual diseases and relieve your pains and make you to sing with the king of Judah, "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast, in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption, for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back" (Isaiah xxxviii. 10, 15, 17).

Recollect how it fared with your soul when at times your spirit was overwhelmed within you and the water had gone over your soul. Yet then did the Lord visit you. He heard your cry: He brought you up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay: He set your feet upon a rock and established your goings (Psalms xl. 2). Even then when your soul fainted within you you remembered the Lord, and your prayer came in unto Him into His holy temple (Jonah ii. 7).

You complain that whereas in former times you had falls and also recoveries, yet now you find little change, but a constant langour and deadness of spirit, even "a perpetual backsliding." Then your complaint is the same that David uttered long ago, "The enemy hath persecuted my soul, he hath smitten my life down to the ground: he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those

that have been long dead; therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me, my heart within me is desolate" (Psalms cxliii. 3, 4). But, with David, do you also remember the days of old? Who formerly raised you up and recovered you? Who restored your soul? None else than your gracious Shepherd whose charge you still are. "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans v. 10). As sure as Jesus died and now lives, so surely they who have died with Christ unto sin shall live with Him also. Lazarus was once delivered from the power of death, yet a second time he sunk into the grave. Is it for that reason the less likely that he whom Jesus thus honoured shall have part at last in the resurrection of the just?

Formerly, your heavenly Teacher gave you shorter lessons, now He gives you heavier and longer tasks. He tries your strength, and makes you feel your own weakness that your strength may be in God. For two tedious years Joseph pined in prison, and concluded that his friend, the chief butler, would never remember him more. But his God had not forgotten him, and even then his highest exaltation was near at hand. Even in his confinement Joseph had one support, that the Lord showed him mercy and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. If the Lord has still given you favour in the sight of some of His own servants and people, esteem it as showing you mercy and as a token for good. Your deliverance from trouble is fast approaching. If your wilderness grow more dreary as you advance, yet you are always drawing nearer its confines, nearer to the water of Jordan. If the river become deeper as you wade through, yet you are assuredly approaching the

farther bank, the boundary of Canaan, the fields of your rest. The days of your mourning will soon be ended, for "your complete salvation is nearer than when ye first believed"; nearer, by many steps, than it was on the happy "day of your espousals," when nothing but the voice of gladness and singing was heard in your tabernacle.

2. Suffer me to add a word of admonition. Remember you are yet in the body. You bear about with you a body of sin and of death of which you cannot be wholly freed in this world. While you cannot suppose that you are already perfect and need not expect to become so here yet press on toward perfection. Let not your discouragements hinder your exertions. Let not weeping hinder working. Still sow, though in tears. In due time you shall reap and bring your sheaves rejoicing home. Bear up under your present burdens. You will soon cast off that "vile body," and it will encumber you no longer. "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he will strengthen thy heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord" (Psalms xxvii. 14). Remember you are yet in the wilderness. Do not expect that here you can feed daily on the grapes of Eshcol. A rich cluster may at a time be brought to your hand, but it is not the native growth of this barren soil. You may find some "bitter herbs" mixed with your sweetest portion, but they are of a salutary purifying virtue. Bless God for your daily manna, the word, and prayer, and daily ordinary duties, comforts, and opportunities. Use these diligently and thankfully when richer cordials are not given. They will be as honeycomb, sweet to the soul and health to the bones (Proverbs xvi. 24).

Remember you are yet in the midst of the enemies, your warfare is not yet accomplished. Your enemies may have been put to flight, but they are not yet banished from the land. Do not expect the conqueror's crown while you are but in the heat of the conflict. The time is not yet fully come for putting off your armour, but be strong and of good courage, be not afraid, neither be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you whithersoever you go (Josh. i. 9). Even now, the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in; behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, skilfully and tenderly conducting the process until He shall have purged away thy dross and taken away all thy tin. Jesus, the everliving Mediator, is even now praying, nay, He hath already prayed and obtained His request that your faith fail not till the combat be ended, till the victory over the "last enemy" be complete, till the crown of life be obtained, till you come to Zion with singing and everlasting joy upon your head, till you obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall for ever flee away.

As to such as desire not the salvation promised in the everlasting covenant, we cannot conclude without addressing to you this affectionate counsel, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Amen.

The Divine Physician

BY THE

Rev. ALEXANDER GUNN, Watten.*

"But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."—*Matt. ix. 12.*

There is no article of faith more certain than that Jesus Christ is an all-sufficient and most willing Saviour, able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, and that those that come unto Him He will in no wise cast out. Those that entrust their souls to His hands He keeps, and none of them is lost. It is also certain that all the guilty sons of Adam stand in the most absolute need of Him; in vain do they look for salvation in any other; without Him they are undone for ever. And without Him their very existence becomes a curse, and their immortality but the duration of their misery.

* The Rev. Alexander Gunn was minister of the parish of Watten, Caithness, from 1805 to 1836. It was under a sermon preached at Berriedale by Dr Angus Mackintosh, Tain, that Mr Gunn was awakened to religious concern. Mr Auld, in his "Ministers and Men in the Far North," has given the following description of his preaching:—"Great fulness of doctrinal statement marked Mr Gunn's preaching. Some work, not exclusively, yet most frequently, a special field of truth; he wrought more equally the whole. During the earlier years of his ministry he preached a good deal what is called 'the law.' We do not, of course, mean legal doctrine, but a spiritual outbringing of fallen man's condition before God. . . . . Let it

The disease of sin has so deeply infected their souls that none but this divine Physician can heal them. Since this is the case, who would not expect that Jesus would be universally the desire of mankind? Ah, who would not expect that as many as are wounded and just perishing of their wounds, would all earnestly apply to this Physician, and seek relief from Him upon any terms? Who would suspect there should be so much as one heart cold and disaffected towards Him? Must not all love and desire Him, since all need Him so extremely, and since He is so completely qualified to be their Deliverer?

not be supposed, however, that his declaration of the Gospel remedy was straitened. Far otherwise. The love of God the Father, the grace of God the Son—personal and mediatorial—and the power and fellowship of the Holy Spirit, were not only declared but also largely held forth; and towards the latter years of his ministry, these truths received from him singularly full treatment" (pp. 26, 27). The above sermon was preached in 1809, and is taken from the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* (xiii., pp. 245, 287). An editorial footnote says:—"This sermon is the only discourse, with the exception of a short address (see Magazine, January, 1897), of this eminent minister that has ever been published, and while it belongs to the earlier and less powerful period of his ministry, it still contains sound, evangelical truth, fitted to be spiritually useful, and giving some index of the commanding ability of the preacher." It is right to add, however, the following extract from a letter of his son, the Rev. Alexander Gunn (who succeeded him) to Rev. Alexander Auld: "I have to say that while a large proportion of those [sermons] dating from 1801 to 1810 are extant, and a few from 1810 to 1814, there is not one sermon, or even a scrap of notes or heads of sermons from 1815 and onwards in existence. We have, therefore, no written record whatever of my father's ministrations in by far the best and most useful periods of his life, from 1815 to 1836. . . . All his hearers, I believe, whose recollections go so far back, agree that there was a remarkable advance in the spirituality and power of his preaching from about 1815 or 1816 onwards."

But, alas! notwithstanding such favourable expectations from the nature of the thing, it is a most notorious fact that this divine Physician is but little regarded in our dying world. This all-sufficient and willing Saviour is generally neglected by perishing sinners. There are thousands among us that have no affectionate thoughts of Him, no eager longings after Him. They exert no vigorous endeavours to obtain an interest in Him, nor are they tenderly solicitous about it. They indeed profess His religion and call themselves Christians after His name; they pay Him the compliment of a bended knee, and now and then perform the external duties of religion, and thus have high hopes they shall be saved through Him; but as to their hearts and affections, He has no share there—these are reserved for the world which, in practical estimation, they prefer to Him, whatever they profess.

Now, whence is this strange and shocking alienation of affection from Him who is the Lord of life and glory, the fountain of all good? Whence is it that the dying are careless about a Physician—that a Saviour is neglected by those that are perishing? The true reason we may find in our text—"They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." That is, they who imagine themselves well, however disordered they are in reality, do not feel their need of a Physician, and therefore will not apply to Him and put themselves under His care. This is the answer of Christ to the proud, cavilling Pharisees who censured His free conversation with publicans and sinners at an entertainment which Matthew had prepared for Him.

The publicans were a sort of custom-house officers among the Jews, appointed by the Romans, whose

tributaries they then were, to collect the duties imposed by the Government. They were generally persons of bad morals, and particularly given to rapine and extortion in raising the taxes. On this account they were particularly hated by the Jews—especially by the strict sect of the Pharisees. Their very office would have rendered them odious, even though they had behaved well in it, for it was a public badge of the slavery of the Jews to the Romans, which, to a people so proud and so fond of liberty as the Jews, was a mortification they could not patiently bear. The publicans were, therefore, objects of general contempt and abhorrence, as an abandoned sort of men; and the Jews—particularly the rigid and haughty Pharisees—held no conversation with them, but kept them at a distance, as though they had been excommunicated. Hence says Christ concerning one excommunicated by the Church for incorrigible wickedness, "Let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Matt. xviii. 17). That is, "have no intercourse with him, but treat him as the Jews do the publicans."

The compassionate Jesus, who came "to seek and save that which was lost," did not conduct Himself towards those outcasts upon the rigid principles of the Pharisees. They held them in such contempt that they did not labour to instruct and reform them. But Jesus preached to them, conversed with them freely, used the most condescending, affable, and ingratiating measures to reform them, and called some of them to the honour of being His disciples. Of this number was Matthew, the author of this history. Once an abandoned publican, afterwards a disciple, an apostle, and one of the four evangelists whose writings have diffused the vital savour of the name of Jesus through all ages and countries. O!

the condescension, the freeness, the efficacy of the grace of Christ! It can make a publican an apostle, an abhorred outcast the favourite of heaven and the companion of angels.

What abundant encouragement does this give to the most abandoned sinner among you to turn to the Lord! Let publicans and sinners despair of mercy and salvation if they continue in their present condition; but if they arise and follow Jesus at His call and become His humble, teachable disciples, they need not despair. Nay; they may rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and be assured they shall be admitted into the kingdom of God when the self-righteous children of the kingdom are shut out.

When Matthew had embraced the call, he made a feast for his new Master, that he might show his respect and gratitude to Him, and that he might let his brother publicans and old companions have an opportunity of conversing with Him and receiving His instructions. The blessed Jesus, who was always ready to embrace every opportunity of doing good, whatever popular odium it might expose Him to, cheerfully complies with Matthew's invitation, and mingles with a crowd of publicans at his table. Like a physician, He employs Himself among the sick and dying, and not among the healthy and gay. The conversation of sinners could not be agreeable to Him. To converse with His Father and the holy angels would have been more pleasing to His holy soul, but if by conversing with sinners in our guilty world, He can but save the perishing creatures, He cheerfully submits to the self-denial, and even rejoices in it, just as a compassionate physician, though he has no pleasure in the melancholy mansions of sickness, yet frequents them that he may relieve the distressed.

The Pharisees now thought they had a good handle to raise popular clamour against Christ, and therefore cavil at these freedoms as though they had been profane, and inconsistent with the character of the Messiah, or even of a prophet. If He claimed this character, they thought it much more becoming Him to keep company with them than with profligate publicans. Hence, to stumble and perplex His disciples, they come to them and ask, "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" The disciples were not as yet endowed with that mouth and wisdom which all their enemies could not withstand, and therefore Jesus answers them, and takes upon Himself His own defence: "The whole," says He, "have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." Some suppose that by "the whole" Christ means those that were really whole, or that were not so infected with the disease of sin as to stand in need of Him as a Physician. When such persons can be found among the sons of men, this exposition will appear plausible. But since we know that all have sinned and stand in need of Christ as a Saviour, it is much more reasonable to suppose that by "the whole" Christ means those that imagined themselves whole, though really languishing with the deadly disease of sin. As if He had said, "I come unto the world under the character of a physician for sick souls. Such these despised publicans are, and, therefore, these are the persons I have to deal with, and these are most likely to make application to me. But as for yourselves, you think you are righteous; you think you are not so far gone with the disease of sin as to need a Physician sent down from heaven to heal you. While you continue to entertain this high opinion of yourselves, I have no business with you as a Physician. I must

therefore rather choose to converse with these sinners, who now begin to see themselves such, and to be sensible of their need of a Physician." Thus, as I observed, Jesus here vindicates His conduct even upon the principles of the Pharisees themselves. It was not now to His purpose to dispute the high opinion they had of themselves. But when it was proper, He faithfully exposes their true character as proud, self-righteous hypocrites, and denounces the most terrible woes against them.

To give a fuller view of this text, and to adapt it to practical purposes, I intend to describe the character of those that are whole and of those that are sick, in the senses here intended. There is none of the sons of men who are really "whole." Their souls are all diseased; for all have sinned, and there is none righteous, no, not one. And perhaps there is none upon earth so proud and so ignorant of themselves as to affirm in so many words that they are whole, that is, perfectly righteous. Therefore by "the whole" cannot be meant either those who are really free from all sin or those who imagine themselves entirely free from it. It does not appear that even the proud Pharisees were capable of flattering themselves so far. But by "the whole" are meant those who are indeed guilty, depraved sinners, and who are ready to make a superficial profession in words that they are sinners, but continue secure and impenitent, insensible of their guilt, their corruption, their danger, and their need of a Saviour; that is, those who are really sick and dangerously ill, and yet are as easy, as unapprehensive of danger, as careless about applying to the Physician as if nothing ailed them. The disease is of a lethargic, stupefying nature, so that they are not sensible of it. It

renders them delirious, so that they think themselves well when the symptoms of death are strong upon them. What multitudes of such may we see in the world. The Word of God pronounces them dangerously ill; their friends may see the most deadly symptoms upon them; but, alas! they are insensible of their own case. Jesus, the divine Physician, warns them of their danger, offers them His help, and prescribes to them the infallible means of recovery; but they disregard His warnings, neglect His gracious offer, and refuse to submit to His prescriptions. This is the general character of those that are "whole" in the sense of my text.

By "the sick" are meant those who, like the former, are really guilty, corrupt sinners in extreme need of a Saviour, and who readily confess they are such. But here lies the difference. They are not only such in reality, and they not only acknowledge that they are such, but they are *deeply sensible of it;* they are tenderly affected with their case; their temper and conduct, their thoughts of themselves and of Jesus Christ, their designs and endeavours, are such as are natural to a soul sensibly sick of sin, and such as bear a resemblance to those of a person sick in body and using all means for a recovery. It is the characteristic of this class of sinners, not that they are less holy or in more danger than others, but that they are more sensible of their condition and more solicitous and laborious about deliverance. They feel themselves disordered; they put themselves under the care of Jesus, the only Physician of souls; they submit to His prescriptions, and use all means for recovery to soundness of mind from the deadly disease of sin. This is the general character of the sick in the sense of my text, but it is necessary I should descend to particulars.

The particular characters of the whole and sick, in contrast, are such as these:—

1. He that is whole has never had a clear, affecting sight and sense of sin, but he that is sick is fully convinced and deeply sensible of it. The one has only a general, superficial, unaffecting conviction that he is a sinner, that he has not been so good as he should have been, that his heart is somewhat disordered, and especially that he has been guilty of sundry bad actions. But, alas! he neither sees his sinfulness in its full extent, nor is suitably affected with that little of it he sees. He does not clearly see the entire and universal corruption of his heart, and the numberless principles and seeds of sin that are there, the blindness of his mind as to divine things, the secret disaffection of his heart towards God and holiness, the carnality of his mind, and his lukewarmness and formality in the duties of religion. He may have a transient glance—a superficial view—of these things, but he has not a deep, settled conviction of them, nor is he suitably affected with what he knows of his own sinfulness. It does not appear to him such a mighty matter to have such a disordered heart towards God, to have dropped a forbidden word now and then, or to have committed a few bad actions—few, I say, for so they appear to him, though repeated times and ways beyond number. Sin appears to him a small evil, and he has a thousand excuses to make for it. Hence he is as easy, as careless, as presumptuous in his hopes, as if he believed he did not really deserve punishment from a righteous God, and therefore was in no danger. Though the leprosy of sin spreads ever so wide, and breaks out into ever so many putrid and mortifying sores, yet he is easy

and secure and insensible of the disease. Thus, like a man in health, he is unconcerned, and neither apprehends himself sick, nor uses the least means for his recovery. O! what multitudes of such are among us. They will confess themselves sinners with as little concern as if they were quite free from sin, or as if they thought there was little or no danger in it.

But is it so with the poor, sick sinner? O! no; he sees, he feels, that his whole head is sick and his whole heart faint, and that from the crown of the head even unto the sole of the foot there is nothing but wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores. He feels the plague of a hard, senseless heart, and the secret springs of wickedness within him. He feels that sin has enfeebled all his powers, and that he is no more able to exert them in religious endeavours than a sick man is to employ himself in active life. When he is awakened out of his security and his eyes are opened to see himself in a just light, he perceives the symptoms of spiritual death strong upon him. So clear are his views of his entire and universal depravity and imminent danger, that he is utterly astonished he was so blind as never to discover it before. Now, also he has a deep sense of the evil of sin. He not only sees himself universally disordered, but he sees and feels the disorder to be deadly. Sin now appears to him the greatest evil upon earth, or even in hell; as worthy of the severest vengeance from a righteous God; as contrary to the divine purity; as a base, ungrateful violation of the most strong and endearing obligations; as destructive to the soul, not only according to the penalty of the divine law, but in its own native tendency.

During the progress of the Christian life the believer feels himself recovering a little, though very slowly, while

he follows the prescriptions of his divine Physician and receives healing influences from Him. He feels his enfeebled soul gathering a little strength, his vitiated taste gradually corrected, and the welcome symptoms of returning health. But O ! he is sensibly sick still. The cure is not complete in this world, but the remains of his old disorder hang upon him all his life, and he is subject to many dangerous relapses in which it gathers new strength, and he is often afraid it is incurable.

2. They that are whole are generally easy and secure and unapprehensive of danger, but the sick soul is alarmed and anxious, and cannot be easy till it perceives some appearance of recovery. He that is whole is benumbed with a stupid insensibility, but he that is sick is in pain from the disease of sin which he sensibly feels. The one can walk about merry and thoughtless, with a hard, depraved heart within him ; the other is perpetually uneasy, and, like a sick man, has no taste for anything while he feels such a heart within him. If the one is anxious, it is with some worldly care ; if the other is anxious, it is chiefly for the recovery of his dying soul. The one can give himself up to business or pleasure or idleness, as a man in health and at ease ; the other is apprehensive that his soul is in great danger. He is alarmed with the deadly consequences of sin, as it exposes him to the wrath of God, the loss of heaven, and all the miseries of hell. But this is not all that distresses him ; he considers sin in itself as a loathsome disease, and is pained with its present effects upon him. As a sick man is not only alarmed at the consequence of his disease, namely, death, but considers it as a present pain, and as depriving him of the present comforts of life, so the sick soul feels sin

as a loathsome, painful disease that now deprives it of the exalted pleasures of religion, and renders it incapable of serving its God with vigour and life. This indisposition of soul for the exercises of religion is in itself a constant uneasiness to him who is spiritually sick. How strongly does Paul represent the case when he cries out, "O, wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans vii. 24). This is the character of the soul sick of sin. But he that is whole hath little or no uneasiness upon this account. If he is ashamed at all, it is with the consequence of sin; he fears nothing but the punishment. As for the disease itself, it is so far from giving him uneasiness that he is fond of it, and unwilling to part with it. It affords him sensations of pleasure rather than of pain, and he rather dreads a recovery than the continuance of the disorder. That holiness which is the health of the soul is disagreeable to him, and he would rather continue languishng than recover. Maybe you can easily distinguish between sickness and health of body, and you are very ready to do it. And will you not inquire what state your souls are in—whether they are sensible of their sickness and in a way of recovery; or whether they are insensible of their danger, and unsolicitous about their recovery? May you examine yourselves in these particulars.

3. They that are whole are unwilling to apply to a physician or to follow his prescriptions, but to the sick a physician is most welcome, and they will submit to his directions, however self-denying and mortifying. This is the point my text has particularly in view, and therefore we must take particular notice of it. They that are in health have no regard to a physician as such; they

neither send for him, nor will they accept of his help if offered gratis: they look upon the best of medicines with neglect, as of no use or importance to them: the prescriptions proper to the sick they hear with indifference, as not being concerned. Thus it is with thousands who imagine themselves whole in spirit. The Lord Jesus exhibits Himself to the sons of men under the character of a physician. The gospel makes a free offer of His assistance to all sick souls that will freely accept it, and what reception does He generally meet with? Why, multitudes neglect Him as though they had no need of Him. They may indeed pay Him the compliment of professing His religion because it happened to be the religion of their fathers and their country, but they have no eager desires after Him: they are not in earnest and laborious to obtain His assistance: they do not invite Him with the most affectionate entreaties to undertake their case: they do not beg and cry for relief from Him like blind Bartimæus (Mark x. 47), "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on us." In short, whatever regard they may possess for Him, they are not deeply sensible of their absolute need of Him: they are not feelingly affected towards Him as towards a being with whom they have the nearest personal concern—a concern of the utmost importance—and the reason is, they are whole in their own apprehensions; or if they feel some qualms of conscience—some fits of painful remorse—they soon heal their own hurt slightly, crying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. They make a medicine of their own prayers, tears, repentance, and religious endeavours, and with this they hope to heal themselves. Thus Jesus is neglected. They give Him the name of a Saviour, but in reality they look to themselves for a cure. How is

the gospel that makes the offer of relief from this heavenly Physician generally received in the world? It is neglected as the offer of superfluous help. It is heard with that indifference with which men in health attend to the prescription of a physician to the sick, in which they have no immediate concern. But this neglected gospel is the only effectual means for healing your dying souls. Then what means the inattention with which it is heard? What means the general neglect with which it is treated? But this it is all around us.

Again, Jesus prescribes to the sons of men the only means of their recovery. Particularly He enjoins them no more to drink poison, that is, no more to indulge themselves in sin, which is, in its own nature, the most deadly poison to the soul. This divine Physician likewise requires them to use the means of grace instituted in the gospel, to meditate upon their condition, and obtain a deep sense of their disorder, to read and hear the Word with solemn attention and self-application, to pray with frequency and importunity. These are His prescriptions to all that would recover under His hands. But how few observe them in earnest. A general neglect of the means of grace prevails, or they are attended upon with carelessness, which is equally pernicious. Christ also enjoins them to submit to Him as their Physician, to flatter themselves no longer that they can heal themselves by means within their own power, but to apply His blood as the only healing balm to their wounded souls. But, alas, they disregard this grand prescription; they will not submit to Him, but, like an obstinate patient, will have their own way, though eternal death should be the consequence.

But this is not the case of the sinner spiritually sick. He will do anything—he will submit to anything—if it may but save him from the mortal disease of sin. How ardently does he long after Jesus! With what willingness does he put himself under His care! With what joy and gratitude does he hear the offer of free salvation in the gospel, and how dear is the gospel to his heart on this account! With what anxiety does he inquire whether he is upon the recovery or not! With what pleasure does he discover the signs of returning health—to feel a little eager appetite for spiritual food, to feel a little spiritual life in religious exercises, to feel himself able to run in the way of God's commandments, to feel the principles of sin weakened within him. How willingly does he submit to the prescriptions of his Physician, and attend upon the means of grace, however disagreeable to a carnal mind! He makes the law of God the rule of his conduct. He guards against relapses, and keeps out of the way of temptation as far as possible. But those who think their souls healthy and vigorous boast of their strength and what mighty things they can do in religion. As for him, he feels his weakness; he feels he can do nothing aright but as he receives daily strength from Christ. He feels himself every day troubled with some disorder or other, therefore he is daily sensible of his need of the Physician, and makes daily application to Him. He does not grudge to take time from his other affairs that he may use means for the recovery of his soul. For if he lose his soul, what would the whole world profit him? In short, the sick sinner is a tender, frail creature, entirely dependent upon Christ, and every day taking means from Him, anxious for his recovery, and willing to submit to anything that may

promote it. This is the man, in our Christian-despising world, that gives Jesus a most willing and welcome reception, and embraces His gospel as containing all his salvation and all his desire. May the number of sick among us be daily increasing!

But, alas! amidst the full means of recovery, the generality die in their sins, and the great reason is, they will not be convinced of their danger nor be persuaded to apply to the Physician. How affecting a case is this, and what may render it the more so to us is that it is the case of some of us. Yes, though I am unwilling to harbour one hard thought of any of you, I cannot avoid concluding that there are some—I am afraid many—souls in this assembly who are not sensible of their dangerous disease and their need of Christ as a Physician, and, therefore, are in danger of perishing without Him. Sin, like a strong dose of opium, has laid you asleep, and you feel easy and whole-hearted, as if nothing ailed you, when the symptoms of death are strong upon you. We can weep and lament over the sick-bed of a dying friend, and we even drop our tears after him into the grave, but shall we drop no tears this day over dying souls that are so numerous among us? O, that our head were waters and our eyes a fountain of tears, that we might "weep day and night over the slain of the daughter of my people." Ye secure and whole-hearted sinners, must it not terrify you to think that Jesus Christ, the only Physician, gives you up? You see in my text He looks upon you as persons that He has no business with. He had rather converse with publicans and sinners than with you, as having more hopes of success among them. Let publicans and sinners take the hint, and be encouraged to apply to Jesus. Come, ye profligate and

libertines, drunkards, swearers, whoremongers; come, sinners of the most abandoned character, apply to this Physician. He is willing to heal you; He offers you healing. "Wilt thou be made whole?" is His question to you this day. He is also perfectly able—able to save to the uttermost, however inveterate your disease may be. If the children of the kingdom shut themselves out, if self-righteous Pharisees reject this Physician and die in their sin, do you come in, put yourselves under His care, submit to His prescriptions, and you shall yet live and be restored to perfect health and eternal life. Your being sick of sin is a necessary qualification to render you His patients; they are such He loves to converse with, and they are only such who are recovered by Him. Therefore, this day give yourselves up to Him as His willing patients. Cry to Him, "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed."

I shall conclude my subject by giving answers from it to some questions that may arise in your minds on this occasion. What is the reason that so many lie in such a dead security around us? Whence is it there is so much sin, and so little fear of punishment? Whence is it that men will entertain such hopes of heaven upon such slight evidences, or rather, with the full evidence of the Word of God against them? The reason is, they are whole in their own imagination: they think themselves well, and therefore apprehend no danger, but lie in a dead, inactive sleep.

What is the reason that so many neglect the means of grace in public and private? Whence is it that there are so many prayerless families as a piece of useless lumber? Why is the house of God so thinly frequented in many places, and the table of the Lord almost

deserted? Why is Christian conversation so unfashionable? And why do we hear so few inquiries from sinners, what they shall do to be saved? The reason is, they imagine themselves well: they are whole-hearted, and therefore it is no wonder they neglect the means of recovery. The only method to bring them to use those means in earnest is to make them sensible of their dangerous disease. And may the Lord enable us to use all proper means with them for this end, and may divine grace render them effectual!

Would you know what is the reason that the blessed Jesus—the most glorious and benevolent person that ever appeared in our world—is so generally neglected? Why is His love forgotten by those very persons for whom He shed His blood? Why are there not more longings and cries for Him? Why is not a Saviour, an almighty and complete Saviour, more sought after by perishing sinners? Why is His name of so little importance among them? How comes it to pass that He may continue for months, for years, for scores of years, offering salvation to them, entreating, commanding, and persuading them to accept, and warning them of the dreadful ruin they will bring on themselves by rejecting it? Whence is it that, after all, He is despised and rejected of men, and that but very few will give Him a suitable reception? Whence is this shocking conduct in reasonable creatures? It is the same reason still—they are whole-hearted, and do not feel themselves dangerously ill; and how then can they be solicitous about a physician?

Would you know why so many fools make a mock of sin, why they can go on impenitent in it, apprehending little or no danger from it; why they are every day sinning, and every day merry, thoughtless, and gay; why

they can live and delight in sin, which God hates, and which He has threatened with such heavy vengeance? Whence is it that, for the recovery of their mortal bodies, men will submit to the most self-denying regimen, take the most nauseous draughts, and be at great pains and expenses, whilst for their souls they will take no pains, use no means, deny themselves no gratification? What is the reason of this? It is the same reason still—they do not feel the least sickness of their souls, but imagine themselves well, and to have no need of the divine Physician or His prescriptions.

Would you know why so many hate faithful preaching, and resent it if any means are used for their recovery? It is because they imagine themselves well, and such do not like to be treated with the importunities of a physician, nor to have disagreeable medicines forced upon them. O, were they but sensible of their condition, they would willingly submit to have their wounds probed and their sores ripped up in order to an effectual cure.

Some of you, perhaps, have wondered why you see poor, mourning creatures here and there that cannot live as you do—thoughtless, careless, unaffected. You ascribe it perhaps to melancholy, to preciseness, to hypocrisy, or an affectation of singularity. But I will tell you the true reason. They are sick; they feel themselves sick; whereas you imagine yourselves well; and you cannot wonder that the sick and the healthy should behave in a different manner.

Why do they not neglect Jesus Christ as you do? It is because they are sick—heart sick—and therefore must long and cry for the Physician of their souls. Why do they not indulge themselves in sin as you do? It is because they are sick of it; they see it to be a mortal

poison, and they cannot be easy while they feel it working through their frame. Why do they use the means with so much earnestness? Why do they pray, and hear and attend upon every religious ordinance with so much zeal and solicitude? Why can they not, like you, attend upon them in a careless, formal manner, or entirely neglect them? The reason is, they are sick—heart sick—and they are using these means for their recovery. And did you view yourselves in the same just light, you would use them too. Yes, you would be as strict, as earnest, as laborious as any of them. Why do they not, like you, abandon themselves, and devote all their time to some worldly pursuit? It is because they are sick, and must take time for the use of the means for their recovery, whatever be omitted. Why are they so much afraid of temptation, and keep out of its way? It is because they are afraid of a relapse, and that sin, their old disease, will renew its strength. Whence are they so often filled with doubts and fears and anxious perplexities? It is because the symptoms of the disorder are doubtful, and they know not whether they are in a way of recovery or not. When they are satisfied on this point, then they can rejoice, and that with a joy more noble than you are capable of.

And, poor sick souls, be of good cheer, you shall yet be healed. Yes, there is balm in Gilead; there is a Physician there. Jesus can heal you, and, blessed be His name, He is as willing as He is able. Continue steadfast in the use of the means appointed for your recovery, and He will make them efficacious. Yes, these sick souls of yours shall yet be as healthy and vigorous as an angel, and you shall ere long be advanced to the

region of immortal health, where the inhabitants no more say, "I am sick." Do not think much of it that a disease so inveterate and mortal should be painful and difficult in the cure. The operation will not last long, and if it does but succeed, self-denial will be infinitely more than compensated.

The deep sense of your disorder is often discouraging to you; you are afraid it will at last prove mortal. But this very thing ought to encourage you. The persons that I cannot speak one comfortable word to are not of your character: they are the secure, whole-hearted sinners. But for you there is strong consolation—so strong that it may bear down all your fears before it. The sense of your disorder qualifies you for the Physician and renders you proper objects of His care. The poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, the broken-hearted, are the characters of the persons that He has to do with, and who are recovering under His hands. And are not these your characters? They are indeed humbling and mortifying, but they are encouraging, as they prepare you for Christ's healing care.

But as for you, whole-hearted sinners, I must pronounce you lost and dead souls. Jesus Himself has declared that He has no business with such as you. And if He casts you off, what other physician can you employ? Alas! you will die in your sins—dreadful death! Better you had never been born, than die in your sins! O, therefore, now labour to be sensible of your disorder while it is curable, for all that are not healed in this life are given up as incurable for ever. Now, apply to Christ as a Physician, for He is willing to undertake your case.

Of all divine institutions none is so peculiarly adapted to promote improvement in spiritual graces and comforts

as the commemoration of the death of Christ at His table. What, then, is the great desire of every real servant of God in this house? Is it not to have your hearts more inflamed with the love of God, and more devoted to His fear? Is not sin your greatest burden, and its remaining influence your greatest grief? Now, where can you have a more reasonable hope of getting your gracious dispositions strengthened, or your sins mortified, than at a Communion Table? Is it not expressly designed for your spiritual nourishment and growth in grace? What can more strengthen your faith in a dying Saviour than being allowed to look upon the signs of His broken body and His blood poured out? What can speak greater peace to the conscience than your being allowed and invited to receive Him explicitly: "This is my body broken for you"? What can more happily serve to kindle and inflame your love to God than the immediate contemplation of His infinite love? Where can you take such a hateful view of sin as at the Lord's Table, where you see it in the Saviour's sufferings? How can you give such a deadly wound to your strongest lusts as by nailing and fixing them to the Redeemer's Cross? What motive of future obedience equal to bearing about in your bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus? See what the Apostle says (2 Cor. v. 14): "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead"; (Gal. ii. 20): "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." What remedy can you find for your own weakness like the all-sufficiency of Christ? "For in Him

dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." Is it not well known, and do not believers at His Table —sensible of their own weakness and confident of their Saviour's power—get their feet upon the neck of their enemies and say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." They have here a complete remedy for their cases as well as their sins. As at the Lord's Table you lay hold of the covenant of grace, so there, if anywhere, you may see that it is "ordered in all things and sure." Your food and raiment, and all necessary provision, are contained in it, and Christ's body is the pledge. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" How gracious the promise, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things." "O taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him. O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear Him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." "He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure." Deliverance from suffering is contained in it. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, "but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Strength and grace to suffer with patience are contained in it. "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." The sanctified use and improvement

of suffering is contained in it. "And we know all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." The path of a Christian is sometimes thorny and difficult, and many of the weak and feeble of Christ's flock are ready to sink and become heartless under a frowning Providence. But is not the Lord's Table a place of refuge? And is it not matter of experience that they have found consolation there? Whatever their complaints have been —whether of sickness, or poverty, or loss of relations, or the slanders of their enemies—they have adored the sovereign will of God in them all. Nay, they have happily seen and confessed His wise and merciful purpose in them all. It was not without a view to his trials that the Psalmist, in the forty-third Psalm, desires to go unto the altar of God—unto God, his exceeding joy. And in the following verse he expresses himself, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

I shall now conclude by desiring you to use the language of the Psalmist in going unto God, who says in the third verse of this Psalm, 'O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles." In order to raise and elevate your minds, to fix and engage your unsettled hearts, apply to God, who hath the hearts of all men in His hand, that He would dispose you for His service, that He would shed abroad His love in your hearts, and make you joyful in His house of prayer. And my

earnest prayer to God for you is that He would at this time convert every whole-hearted and self-righteous sinner in this assembly, pull off the mask of hypocrites, and show them their own likeness; that He would make it a joyful Communion to many of you, and a profitable Communion to all. Amen.

I shall now leave the matter with you after making this remark, that in vain do His enemies oppose Him, in vain do sinners despise Him. He is getting Him a name by the preaching of the gospel. It is still serving its purpose for the calling and confirmation of the vessels of mercy, for aggravating the guilt and increasing the condemnation of the obstinate and disobedient. "And He beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Luke xx. 17, 18).

The Righteousness of God Without the Law

BY THE

Rev. JOHN MACDONALD, D.D., Ferintosh.*

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested."—*Rom. iii. 21.*

The obvious design of this epistle is to illustrate and confirm the important doctrine of the sinner's justification before God—a doctrine which lies at the very foundation of Christianity—which includes in it, and connects with it, all the blessings of eternal life; and apart from which no hope or comfort is left for man, either for time or for eternity. The Jews, though possessing all the advantages of a divine revelation, had fallen into sad mistakes regarding this doctrine. "For they being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and

* Dr Macdonald, afterwards so well-known as one of the greatest of the preachers of the Highlands, was born at Balbein, Brawlbin, parish of Reay, in 1779. His father was James Macdonald, afterwards catechist of Reay, and a well-known figure among "the Men." His son composed one of his finest Gaelic elegies to his saintly father. What the Rev. D. Campbell, Kiltearn, describes as "the most memorable sermon" preached by Dr Macdonald was on the text, "Thy Maker is thine husband" (Is. liv. 5). The preaching of this sermon was accompanied by an extraordinary out-pouring of the Holy Spirit. Another famous sermon was on the text, "Do thyself no harm" (Acts xvi. 28). It was preached at

going about to establish their own righteousness, had not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God" (Rom. x. 3); and sought justification, "not by faith, but, as it were, by works of the law" (Rom. ix. 32).

The Apostle, aware of the fatal consequences of such mistakes, not only to the Jews, but to the world at large, was led, under the guidance of inspiration, to write this epistle chiefly for the purpose of setting this doctrine in a just light. Other points are noticed, it is true, and points of great importance, but these are evidently introduced in their subserviency to this doctrine, or as arising out of it.

In pursuing his design, the Apostle sets out with the fact, which cannot well be denied, that the whole world, Jews and Gentiles, "are guilty before God," all having sinned and come short of His glory. And it falls by natural consequence that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law," he adds, "is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. iii. 19, 20). Of course, if another method of justification, and a method altogether different from anything which man could devise, had not been revealed, man would have been utterly and eternally undone. Such a method, however, the Apostle proceeds to unfold. "But now,"

Dingwall, in August, 1832, during the cholera scare. It was printed at the request of the Committee of the Dingwall Board of Health. A reprint, with a preface by Dr Kennedy, appeared in 1878. This reprint will be found in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* (iv. 102). As a minister Dr Macdonald earned for himself the honourable title of "The Apostle of the North," and his fame as a preacher has been set forth in the designation accorded to him as the "Whitefield of the Highlands." Dr Macdonald, whose labours were signally blessed of the Holy Spirit, passed away in 1847. The above sermon was first printed in "Precious Seed Discourses."

says he, " the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;—to declare, I say, at this time, His righteousness, that He might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus " (Rom. iii. 21-26).

The whole of this interesting passage merits the careful perusal of every reader as containing one of the clearest and most comprehensive views of the doctrine of justification that is to be met with in any part of the sacred volume. It exhibits to us at once a righteousness which constitutes the ground of the sinner's justification, and the manner in which a sinner obtains an interest in it, so as to enjoy the benefits resulting from it. This is by faith, and by faith without the deeds of the law. It points out to us also the ground upon which the sinner may warrantably receive it, and plead an interest in it; or that which may be called the right of acceptance—viz., the free offer of it in the gospel; for " it is unto all," as the light of the sun, for the benefit of the world. We learn from it, further, that this righteousness is actually imputed to every believing sinner, or transferred, in law-reckoning, to his account, so as to avail him for the purposes of justification and eternal life. It is upon all who believe, as a garment (for to this the word alludes), in which they stand covered, clothed, and

adorned before God. And finally, this method exhibits not only the grace of God, which it does in a marvellous manner—for believers are said to be "justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus"—but also the glory of His moral character. For hereby "His righteousness is declared"; and it appears that He "is just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."

The limits to which I must confine myself will not permit me to enter on the consideration of each of these particulars. What I design at present chiefly is, in reliance on divine strength, to direct the attention of my hearers—

I. To that which may be called the foundation of the whole, in this procedure of grace—the righteousness of God. And II. To the righteousness as now manifested. The consideration of these points cannot be inapplicable on any occasion on which we have to address immortal souls; and it is hoped will be seen to be not unsuitable to that which has called us together this day. Our attention, then, is directed—

I. To that which is here called the righteousness of God, and which is represented as the foundation, or meritorious ground, upon which God bestows on man pardon, acceptance, and all the blessings of redemption. In Scripture the term "righteousness" is not infrequently used in a different sense from that in which it is employed here; and it will not be foreign to our purpose for a little to advert to this. It sometimes signifies the righteousness of the divine nature, or that which has been commonly called the moral rectitude of God—a character which is inseparable from His nature, which is displayed

in all His works, and by which He makes it manifest, that as He regards sin with infinite detestation, so He regards moral excellence or goodness with ineffable delight—a character, in short, which includes in it all the perfections of His moral nature—such as holiness, justice, and truth, and which is, therefore, essential to His very being. Hence He is said to be "a God of truth, and without iniquity" (Exod. xxxii. 4); to be "justified when He speaks, and clear when He judges" (Ps. li. 4); to be "righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works (Ps. cxlv. 17); the righteous Lord who loveth righteousness; and whose "countenance beholdeth the upright" (Ps. xi. 7).

It is evident, however, that this cannot be the import of the term in the passage before us. For the righteousness of the divine nature neither is, nor can be, a ground of justification to sinful man. It is rather that which reveals the divine indignation against sin, passes a sentence of condemnation on account of it, and renders it indispensable that sin be punished. Nevertheless, it is of the utmost importance to entertain just conceptions regarding this view of the divine character; for although this is not, and cannot be, the righteousness which justifies the sinner, and which is here referred to, it is not to be considered on that account as having no relation to that righteousness, much less (as many, alas! are too apt to think) as being at variance with it. On the very contrary, there exists the strongest affinity and harmony between the one and the other; for the righteousness of the divine nature is that which (on the supposition that sinners were to be saved) rendered it necessary that the other righteousness by which we might be justified should be wrought out, and thus becomes the very reason of the

existence of this other righteousness. This righteousness or character of God is, besides, the rule or standard to which the righteousness which justifies the sinner must be conformed, and with which, in all its essential characters of spirituality, equity, purity, and perfection, it must correspond. And, lastly, the righteousness which justifies the sinner must be such as to become a transcript of the other, and the mirror which exhibits its true character and glory to men.

Were these things but duly considered by many, they would not blindly or presumptuously trust in what they call the mercy of God, nor venture to approach Him for pardon and acceptance on the footing of any deeds, or even sincerity and penitence of their own, while the righteousness of the divine nature stands in the way, precludes the exercise of mercy, except in consistency with justice, and fences around for ever the rights and prerogatives of divinity. They would, on the contrary, renounce every pretension of this nature, and most humbly and thankfully acquiesce in that wonderful plan, in which "mercy and truth are met together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psa. lxxxv. 10). But, as distinguished from this righteousness of the divine nature and character, that to which our text refers is evidently that which was wrought out by the Son of God in behalf of sinners of mankind. This, and this alone, is that righteousness, "which is by the faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them who believe"; the righteousness, on account of which God accepts the sinner, and which is manifested to the faith and acceptance of men for this purpose. In regard to this righteousness, it is of importance to observe:

1. That it consists in the complete fulfilment of the law in all its precepts and penal sanctions. The law as a covenant of works required of man perfect obedience as the condition of life, and, at the same time, denounced death as the penalty of transgression. The Lord Jesus Christ, accordingly, met the law in both these respects, fulfilled its precepts, and endured its penalty; accomplishing the one by the holiness of His nature and the righteousness of His life, and the other by the awful and unparalleled sufferings of His death. The whole course of His obedience, then, commonly distinguished into active and passive (with what propriety I do not at present inquire), is that which constitutes the right in question and by which, in virtue of the divinity of the person who wrought it out, the law is "magnified and made honourable."

2. The righteousness thus wrought out in fulfilment of the law by the Son of God was altogether of a vicarious nature—it was in behalf of others and not for Himself. He stood wholly in a public, never in a private, capacity. He stood as the representative of sinners. In order to redeem them He assumed our nature, was made under the law, submitted to all its vast demands, and suffered its awful sanctions; for "He was made a curse for us," says the Apostle. If He was wounded it was for our transgressions; if He was bruised it was for our iniquities; if He died the just it was for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. Thus for men He lived, for men He died; and all that He hath done and suffered is to be considered as wholly on their account and in their actual room and stead.

Some, indeed, talk as if His human nature owed obedience to the law for itself, and that only His suffer-

ings were on our account, as procuring for us release from punishment, but that we are left to work for life as we can. This, to say the least of it, affords but poor comfort to the sinner, and in effect leaves him just where he was. But it should be remembered that Scripture never represents the Son of God as having assumed the human nature for Himself, but wholly for others—"Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil: and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. ii. 14, 15). It should also be remembered that the human nature in Him never subsisted in a state of distinct personality, but always in inseparable union with the Godhead, in virtue of which, whatever conformity it might possess to the law as a rule, it could owe no obedience as a covenant under which form it demanded obedience of man, and consequently of the surety. Let us hold, then, by the consoling truth that our divine Redeemer fulfilled the precepts of the law, as well as that He endured its penalty for man; in consequence of which the righteousness which He wrought out has procured a title to life as well as a release from punishment, and bestows the twofold blessing of pardon and acceptance, on every one that believeth. Let us also rejoice that if this righteousness was wrought out in behalf of others, it will also be readily conferred upon them, and eventually be applied to the myriads for whom it was thus accomplished. And let the guilty and condemned sinner avail himself of a righteousness which he is not only warranted but invited, and even commanded, to accept, for all the purposes of salvation.

3. It is a righteousness of infinite value, and therefore available to all the purposes for which it was designed. Wrought out by the Son of God in our nature, it was not only perfect as a complete fulfilment of the law, but a righteousness of such value as to merit life and salvation for others. We can conceive of a perfectly holy human nature giving complete obedience to the law; but in all this there is nothing that could avail for others. The obedience of the highest angel in glory could merit nothing for man: because a finite nature can never exceed that which it was its own duty to perform. But the Son of God, as was noticed already, having assumed the human nature into intimate union with the divine, all the actings and sufferings of that nature derived immediate and infinite value from the divinity, and, properly speaking, are to be considered (and in the estimation of law and justice actually are so) the actings and sufferings not of a finite nature, but of Him who is God in our nature. This is what stamps a value and glory on this righteousness, in consequence of which the law is not only fulfilled, but magnified and made honourable, divine justice infinitely satisfied, redemption obtained for man; and "God is just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."

4. This righteousness has been actually sustained by Jehovah in behalf of sinners, and acted upon in all ages by Him as the ground of their acceptance and complete salvation. This, indeed, might be inferred from what has already been stated; for, if wrought out in obedience to the law, in the room of the guilty, and by the Son of God, we must conceive it to be a righteousness worthy of God to accept and sustain. But, besides this, the resurrection of Christ from the dead, His ascension and recep-

tion to glory—the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and frequently since, the promulgation of the gospel in the world, the dispensation of means and ordinances in the Church, the conversion of sinners, and the experience of saints in all ages—confirm the interesting truth that God the Father, as the righteous Judge, has actually sustained the righteousness of His Son in behalf of sinners, and has actually proceeded upon this as a foundation in receiving sinners into His favour and conferring on them all the blessings of eternal life. Oh, glorious righteousness, through which such blessings flow to man, and such rich revenues of glory accrue to God!

After what has been stated, it will be scarcely necessary to detain you by mentioning some of the reasons why it is here called the righteousness "of God." It is so, as we have seen, because wrought out by Him in our nature. It is so also as exhibiting His glory and moral rectitude to man. It is a transcript of His moral character, and the mirror in which man may behold it. It is so likewise (and perhaps this is the principal reason of its being so called in the text) as being altogether of His provision and appointment. In this, as well as in many other respects, it is opposed to any righteousness of man, and the economy of grace connected with it, to the natural tendencies of his carnal, proud, and legal spirit; so much so that it would never have entered into his heart to conceive of this astonishing method of salvation.

But further, it is called the righteousness of God "without the law." Not that it has no reference to the law, for we have already seen that it was wrought out in fulfilment of it, and therefore that the interests of the law, in all its glory and dignity, were fully consulted in the working out of it. Nor are we to suppose that the

sinner is to have no regard to the law in receiving this righteousness. On the contrary, he recognises it in all the extent and spirituality of its demands; and it is under an impression of the equity of its demands, and of its awful sanctions, that he actually submits to the righteousness of God. But it is a righteousness conferred on the sinner without regard to the deeds of the law, or any works of his done in obedience to the law, as a covenant, and to which he looks, in whole or in part, as the ground of his acceptance with God.

There is a tendency in man to seek justification by works; and he will, even when pressed hard by the law, endeavour to work up in himself convictions of sin, and certain penitential feelings, by which to recommend himself to God for an interest in the righteousness of His Son;—not recollecting that such convictions and inward feelings are designed to prompt us to accept of that righteousness, and not to entitle us in the least degree to an interest in it. The righteousness of God, however, neither proposes nor accepts of any compromise with the law in this respect; and it is the mercy of the sinner, did he but know it, that this is the case.

Lastly, this righteousness, it is said, is "witnessed by the law and the prophets." The ceremonial law in almost all its types and sacrifices prefigured the substitutionary system, or justification by the righteousness of another. And though the moral law did not give any direct information of it, nevertheless, in the perfection of its demands, and the awful nature of its threatenings, it pointed out the necessity of such a righteousness. The prophets all witness concerning it. "Surely," says Isaiah, "shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength" (Isa. lxv. 24). "And this is the

name," saith another prophet, "whereby He shall be called, the Lord our righteousness" (Jer. xxiii. 6). And Daniel tells us that He—Messiah the Prince—should "bring in everlasting righteousness" (Dan. ix. 14). In short, "to Him give all the prophets witness, that, through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 43). Of course, this was not a new and hitherto unheard of doctrine, as some of the Jews were apt to imagine. It was a doctrine known to their fathers, a doctrine recorded in their own writings, and which possessed a peculiar prominence in their system: which, therefore, nothing but wilful blindness and determined unbelief could prevent them from perceiving. And thus God in testifying concerning this righteousness by the law and the prophets, thereby declared not only His high approbation of it, but that it has ever since the fall of man been the exclusive foundation upon which He justifies the ungodly, and confers upon him that believes all the blessings of salvation.

This, then, is the righteousness to which our attention is directed in the text; a righteousness of infinite value and glory wrought out by the Son of God in behalf of sinful men, a righteousness without the law, and a righteousness witnessed by the law and the prophets, a righteousness which has procured for man deliverance from wrath and a title to life, and which actually confers on him who believeth these and all other spiritual blessings, in all the fulness of their extent and eternity of their duration.

II. Let us consider this righteousness, as now manifested. The Apostle has evidently a reference here to the gospel dispensation, as having brought this subject,

together with every other part of redemption, clearly to light. Under the law, these things were adumbrated by a variety of types, ceremonies, and sacrifices. But under the gospel the vail is rent in twain, the shadows have given way to the substance, the Sun of Righteousness has arisen, and a day has dawned upon the world in "the light of which men shall see light." We may observe—

1. That the righteousness is manifested in the gospel as actually wrought out. Here we see the Son of God no longer prefigured by types and sacrifices only, but actually appearing on the field of the world, tabernacling among us, suffering hunger, fatigue, poverty, and reproach, obeying the law in all its precepts, and during the whole course of His active life. We see Him endure its penalty, enter the garden, His soul exceeding sorrowful there, ascend Calvary, suffer Himself to be stretched on the accursed tree, and there, bearing the insults of men, the malice of devils, and, what infinitely exceeded all these, those hidings of His Father's countenance, which led Him to exclaim, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" But we hear Him at last cry, "It is finished!" And thus, having finished transgression, made an end of sin, and made reconciliation for iniquity, "He brought in everlasting righteousness." The gospel thus reveals to us a righteousness actually accomplished. The law pointed to it as a righteousness to be manifested, and ancient believers looked forward with longing expectation to its accomplishment; but the gospel points it out to us as actually wrought out, and manifested as such for the justification of sinners. What a confirmation is this to the faith of God's people, and how daring the presumption of the sinner who, in the

matter of justification, would propose to superadd any doings of his own to a righteousness thus manifested as actually and perfectly wrought out!

2. It is manifested in the gospel, in the universality of its benignant and beneficial designs regarding sinners of mankind. Under the Mosaic economy all the blessings connected with this righteousness were confined to one nation, and shut up within the pale of one church. This, with a few exceptions, was the state of things for ages; and the righteousness in question was during that long period unpublished and unknown to the world at large. But now, it is unto all, not only sufficient in itself for the salvation of all, but designed freely for the benefit of all, exhibited to the faith and acceptance of all indiscriminately, and commanded (for so the commission runs) to be preached to every creature for this purpose. For "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all and in all" (Col. iii. 11). And this righteousness, which is unto all, starting from Calvary, whence it burst forth in its glory on a benighted world, shall continue its career until all nations shall see its manifestation in the gospel, are brought within the sphere of its influence, and blessed with that salvation of which it is at once the medium and the procuring cause to men. O glorious thought! what a warrant to sinners of every description, and of every nation to whom it is proclaimed, to accept of it. And what an encouragement! nay, what an imperious call to communicate the intelligence of it to all nations, far and near, that they may hear of, believe, and be found in this righteousness!

3. In the gospel it is manifested in the greater extent of its triumphs in the salvation of men. Under the

ancient economy, confined as it was to one nation, there were but few among them who believed in the report, and few to whom the arm of the Lord was revealed. But under the glorious gospel of the blessed God, thousands and tens of thousands have been led to believe the record concerning it : to rely on this righteousness as the ground of their justification, and to experience its justifying effects in the enjoyment of pardon of sin, peace with God, access to His presence, and the hope of eternal glory. They have also experienced its sanctifying effects ; for it provides for the sanctification of all who receive it, and this remarkable change is inseparably connected with it, and is its never-failing result. For every believer finds that it is " grace reigning through this righteousness " that renews his heart, overcomes his prejudices, subdues his corruptions, detaches him from the world, elevates his affections to the things which are above, inspires him with zeal for God and devotedness to His cause. In short, it directs, prompts, and strengthens him to abstain from all appearance of evil, to resist the devil, the world, and the flesh, and to follow that " holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." If these effects do not ensue, men but deceive and sadly impose upon themselves by imagining that they trust in this righteousness, while their trust is but a mere pretension ; for if any man be in Christ, and therefore clothed in His righteousness, he is a new creature. And Christ is made to all who believe in Him, not only wisdom and righteousness, but sanctification and redemption. And thus, instead of making void the law, they, on the contrary, establish it. And if such be the triumphs connected with the salvation of one sinner, what shall we conceive of those displayed in

the salvation of the thousands and myriads who, in the days of the apostles, and in every succeeding age since, have been brought under its influence, and made to experience the blessed results of the imputation of this righteousness :—of thousands and myriads, too, of every description, rank, character, kindred, nation, and tongue : and thousands and myriads who have given evidence to the world, by their devotedness to God, and their firmness and fidelity in His cause, their patience under affliction, and the holiness of their lives and conversation, that they owed all their ability thus to act, and all the hopes and prospects that animated them during their Christian journey, to the righteousness of God manifested in the gospel!

Thus the righteousness of God is manifested in the gospel more clearly than ever under the law. It is manifested in the gospel as wrought out : it is manifested unto all, in regard to its tendency and design, and it is manifested in its triumph or actual effects in the salvation of many. And does not the manifestation of it in these respects speak to us? Does it not proclaim to us the invaluable privilege which the Lord has bestowed on us in giving us our lot under such a manifestation of His righteousness, while to many this is denied? How, then, should we remember that "to whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required." How inexcusable, besides, does it leave those who shut their eyes to its value, and refuse to submit to it, expecting by other means, and means of their own devising, to recommend themselves to the favour of God ; or who, if they would not altogether reject this righteousness, for their own justification, yet would bring their own works, their sincerity, their repentance, and some even their faith,

as a price in their hands, by which to acquire a title to this blessing; or who would conjoin these with the righteousness of Immanuel, in order to procure the desired acceptance in the sight of God; thus acting as foolishly as if one should by lighting a taper endeavour to assist and increase the light of the sun. Such conduct carries absurdity, as well as criminality, in its very face. And those who are guilty of it would do well to look to their state in time, and to betake themselves to the true foundation ere it be too late, and the door of mercy be for ever shut, otherwise they shall find that "the hail shall sweep away every refuge of lies, and that the waters shall cover the hiding places."

A very extensive improvement might be made of this subject; but I shall confine myself to the three following observations which I deduce, by way of inference, from what has been said. And—

1. We may hence see of what importance it is that every one of us, for himself, be satisfied that he has submitted to this righteousness, and so fallen in with the design of its manifestation, that we have received it as the righteousness of faith, that we rely upon it exclusively for pardon, acceptance, and eternal life; that we desire to be found in it, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, and that we enjoy the benefits resulting from a personal interest in it, particularly peace with God, filial confidence in His presence, spiritual intercourse with Him, the sanctification of our nature, and the hope of eternal glory. Everything depends on this. Oh, then, let us not rest satisfied without sure and Scriptural evidence regarding this most important of all points. If we are right regarding this, we cannot be materially wrong in regard to other matters relative to

salvation; but if we are mistaken here, be it remembered that we are mistaken for eternity.

2. We may also from this subject see the necessity of divine influence to give effect to this important doctrine. The righteousness of God is manifested, but men do not naturally see it. The sun shines, but the blind cannot behold its light. A vail covers the face of man by nature which hides the glory of this righteousness from his view. It is God alone that can remove this vail (Isa. xxv. 7). It is He who "commandeth the light to shine out of darkness, that shines into the heart of benighted sinners, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6). It is the peculiar province of the Spirit to "convince men of sin, righteousness, and judgment"; "to guide them into all truth," and "to glorify Christ" (John xvi. 13, 14). It was he who led three thousand on the day of Pentecost to believe the report, and to submit to the righteousness of God. And it is He who, in all ages, discovers to sinners their need of this righteousness, reveals its glory, efficacy, and excellence to their view, disposes them to acquiesce in it as the foundation upon which they would stand with acceptance before God, and enjoy all the blessings of eternal life and glory. And it is He alone that can give efficacy to the means appointed by God for the salvation of men, and to all the efforts of His creatures to communicate the knowledge of that salvation to their fellow-men, wherever it is preached. How necessary then is it that we should depend much on the Spirit in all our exertions, and pray that His power and presence may be felt by ourselves individually, and accompany our feeble endeavours to instruct others around us in the knowledge of those things which relate

to their everlasting peace; that so the righteousness of God, which is manifested in the gospel, and whose light shines around them, may thus be manifested in the hearts of many, bringing all the blessings of time and eternity in its train!

3. But, lastly. May we not from this see the obligations which lie on all who enjoy the benefits of the righteousness which is thus manifested, to communicate the knowledge of it to those who are still in darkness and ignorance regarding it? Many both at home and abroad are in this deplorable condition, and must be considered as "perishing for lack of knowledge." And are not we, upon whom the Lord has bestowed the privilege of this revelation, bound by every consideration to do all that we can to meliorate their condition? Are the means afforded us, and shall we withhold these means from them? By so doing should we not be accessory to, and even implicated in, their ruin? "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we know it not, doth not He that pondereth the heart consider it? and shall not He render to every man according to his works?" (Prov. xxiv. 11, 12). But I trust that many among us are otherwise minded; and that from a regard to the glory of God, and love to the souls of men—from a view of the righteousness which is manifested in the gospel for the benefit of all—from considerations arising out of the love and grace of God manifested in this righteousness, and of the responsibility under which they are placed in reference to a final tribunal, they are willing to "know" the situation of "them that are drawn unto death," and to afford them the means of deliverance.

Man's Redemption the Joy of Angels

BY THE

Rev. ALEXANDER STEWART, Cromarty.*

"Which things the angels desire to look into."—*1 Pet. i. 12.*

To the man of the world the salvation of the gospel is one of the most insipid and uninteresting subjects imaginable. His apathy appears in his treatment of the Holy Scriptures, the great record of salvation. The Bible is either read very carelessly, or it is altogether neglected. He sits with listlessness under the preaching of the gospel, indifferent often as to what is said, whether it be true, or whether he understands it or not, and this want of interest, or even a more positive feeling, is but too apparent in the manner in which he makes light of the invitation to the gospel feast, offering the most

* The Rev. Alexander Stewart was the son of the Rev. Dr Alexander Stewart, Dingwall, formerly of Moulin. He was born, 25th September, 1794, in the Manse of Moulin, Perthshire, where his father was then minister. He was licensed to preach the gospel in 1823 by the Presbytery of Lorn, and in November of that year he was chosen to be minister of the Chapel of Ease, Rothesay. In the following year he was called to Cromarty. He was a preacher of great power, and his fame reached Edinburgh. In 1847 the congregation of Free St George's, in that city, addressed a call to him. His sensitive nature shrank from such an onerous charge, but he was at length prevailed on to accept it. After the meeting of the Presbytery of Chanonry at which he had accepted the call, he was walking along the street with Dr Buchanan, one of the

frivolous excuses for not complying with it. His understanding being "darkened through the ignorance that is in him, and blinded likewise by the god of this world, he is alienated from the life of God." The gospel is hid to him in respect to its glory; he has no apprehension of its transcendent excellence, and no desire to participate in its blessings. Even those of us into whose hearts the light of the glorious gospel has in some measure shined are likewise but too apt to be infected with the same spirit. Surrounded consciously by invisible objects, which are continually soliciting our attention, and yet living among men by whom the great salvation is habitually neglected, we are ever in danger of being overpowered by these unceasing influences, and so of relapsing into a state of spiritual slumber.

There are various ways in which this spirit might be opposed. We might address your fears in the language of the mariners to Jonah: "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon thee, and that thou perish not." Or we

commissioners sent north to prosecute the call, who, noticing Mr Stewart's dejected look, remarked to him, "You look as if you were carrying a mountain on your back." "No, Dr Buchanan," came the sad reply, "I am not carrying a mountain, but I am carrying my gravestone on my back." His words proved only too true. An attack of fever came on. To an enquiry made by his doctor, he answered, "I am going to die. It is a solemn thing, doctor, to die, and to meet God in judgment." He quietly fell asleep, 5th November, 1847, in the 53rd year of his age (*Some Noted Ministers of the Northern Highlands*, p. 238). The above sermon is taken from *Precious Seed Discourses by Scottish Worthies*, and is one of the great masterpieces of the Scottish pulpit, occupying a place alongside of Dr MacLaurin's famous sermon, *Glorying in the Cross of Christ*.

might exhibit to your hopes the great things which God has promised to those who love Him; and ask you, if a kingdom which cannot be moved, a crown which fadeth not away, be such trifles as not to be worth making some exertion to obtain them? Or the words of God might more be re-echoed in your hearing, and the demand made, whether He has not a right to expect attention from His creatures. These might prove powerful considerations; but the one suggested by the words before us is different, and very peculiar. As Paul speaks (Rom. xi. 11) of provoking his brethren, the Jews, to jealousy by the Gentiles, *i.e.*, of exciting by a holy emulation amongst the Jews that earnest attention and interest in the gospel which was felt by the Gentiles, so would we endeavour to provoke you to jealousy by the conduct of angels, beings of a totally different order from us. Learn, then, that the salvation of the gospel, the grace manifested to you, the incarnation of God's eternal Son, the life of holiness and beneficence which He led, the miracles which He performed, the grace and truth which, like the dew from heaven, dropped from His lips, the indignities which were offered Him, the hardships to which He submitted, the complicated and unparalleled sufferings which He endured, the decease which He accomplished at Jerusalem, His resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, the conversion of sinners, the gospel dispensation, the restoration of the Jews, the calling in and fulness of the Gentiles, the millennial glory, the resurrection of the dead, the consummation of all things at the final judgment—all these, the sufferings of the Messiah, with the glories which were to follow, insipid and uninteresting as they may be to man, for whom the

mighty interposition was made, are, notwithstanding, things which angels desire to look into.

There seems to be an allusion in the words of the text to the situation and position of the cherubim in the Holy of Holies, a species of reference to the typical service of the law which is perpetually occurring in the New Testament (Exod. xxv. 17-20).

In further illustrating the interesting fact stated in the text, viz., that the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories which resulted from His sufferings, are a subject which strongly engages the attention of angels, it may be proper, in the first place, to advert shortly to some things respecting the nature, character, and employments of these celestial spirits; and then, in the second place, to enquire what in the mysteries of redemption, as a manifestation of divine glory, makes the subject so deeply interesting to angels.

I. Notice briefly some particulars relating to the nature, character, and employments of angels—who and what are those beings of whom the Apostle speaks? This is evidently necessary in order to understand the passage, and properly to feel its force. If those who discover a deep interest in a subject be adduced as a recommendation of the study of such subject, and an inducement to imitate in this their example, it is obvious that very much indeed depends on the character of these persons. If it is a theme in which persons of exalted genius and of most excellent dispositions find peculiar delight, the inference is that the subject itself must be peculiarly excellent and interesting.

Angels are beings of very high mental and moral endowments. The Scriptures give us sufficient reason

to believe that they are an order superior to us. The Psalmist, in the eighth Psalm, although speaking of man as having dominion over this lower world, and crowned with glory and honour, still acknowledges, in the same passage, that he "is lower than the angels." The destruction of Sennacherib's army, the pestilence which wasted Israel, the death of the first-born in Egypt, and other similar events ascribed in Scripture to the ministry of angels, afford an appalling idea of that strength in which the Psalmist tells us in another Psalm they "excel," so that there seems to be more than a mere poetical imagination in the idea of our great poet that they can arm themselves with the very elements by which they are surrounded. Satan, who is described in Scripture as possessed of peculiar subtlety and power, although an instance of a sadly perverted mind, affords a high idea of the intellectual superiority of angels. The Apostle speaks not of fallen angels, but of those who kept their first estate, and who are holy beings, and are expressly called in the Scriptures holy angels.

Such being the high order of intelligence to which angels belong, attend next to the very peculiar means of improvement which they possess. They dwell in heaven, in God's immediate presence, the place of His glory, and the habitation of His throne. The angels see God's face. In this expression there is a reference to the practice of Eastern kings, who admitted none but their chief counsellors and favourites into their presence. This is an honour which is not granted to any sinful mortal man, for God said to Moses, "Thou canst not see my face, for no man can see me and live." But in the conclusion of the Book of Revelation we are told that God's servants shall in heaven see His face. They shall enjoy a full

manifestation of His glory, and be admitted, in a certain degree, into His counsels.

Now, this is a privilege which the angels have always enjoyed. They are represented as the immediate attendants of the King Eternal. When Isaiah saw in vision the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, the seraphims were in attendance, and worshipping, they cried one to another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts." "God's chariots," says the Psalmist (lxviii. 17), "are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them, as in the holy place." "Take heed," said Christ (Matt. xviii. 10), "that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." In the Book of Revelation, where we have a glimpse of the heavenly world, we see that the holy angels surround the throne of God, they contemplate His glory, and they "do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word" (Ps. ciii. 20). They are angels of light, and they dwell in the world of light. No human being was in existence when God created the heavens and the earth; man saw not the wonders of creation. Hence God demands of Job (xxxviii. 4), "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare if thou has understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof?" But when God prepared the heavens, and set a compass on the face of the deep, when thick darkness was the swaddling-band of the infant world, and when He commanded light to shine out of darkness, these sons of the morning were

present, and sang together, these elder sons of God shouted for joy.

Not only did angels witness the wisdom, power, and goodness manifested in creation, they have likewise witnessed the events which have since that taken place in this world. They saw our first parents happy in Paradise, and afterwards expelled for their transgression. They saw Noah and his family enter the ark, and the avenging waters of the deluge sweep away an ungodly world. They saw Abraham leave his kindred and his father's house, and wander a stranger and a pilgrim in the land of promise. They saw Israel oppressed in Egypt, delivered by a strong hand and an outstretched arm, led through the wilderness, and settled in Canaan. They have seen the rise and fall of empires, and interesting events of which we are in absolute ignorance. And we must take into account the advantage they had in understanding these events as a part of the dispensation of providence to them. This knowledge of the facts must be correct, because they witnessed them, and likewise had access to know their causes. While not pretending to define the extent to which angels are acquainted with the purposes of divine providence, it is unquestionable that they have not only extensive knowledge of historical matters of fact, but likewise of the connection of such events with the general dispensation of providence as illustrative of the divine character. They are behind the curtain which conceals the invisible world from our view. What we call the light of revelation seems to be but some scanty rays of the noonday splendour in which they dwell penetrating this curtain.

Now, apply these remarks to our present subject. The angels, we have seen, are superior beings of very

high powers of mind. They are furnished likewise with most ample means of improvement and of increasing their knowledge. At what time they were created we are not told; but as Adam was tempted by a fallen angel, there can be no doubt they were created before man. For these six thousand years at best, then, with minds which were never darkened by sin, free from all the imbecility of infancy or of age, or the infirmity of mortality, with the wide field of creation, and with a most extensive view of the dispensations of providence before them, God Himself being their instructor, they have been contemplating His character, as illustrated by the wonders which He is continually performing. And what, think you, is the subject which rivets the attention of these exalted spirits? It is the sufferings of Christ, and the glorious consequences. The stable at Bethlehem, and the garden of Gethsemane, and the hill of Calvary, furnish illustrations of the divine character which they find nowhere else. And the angels, the inhabitants of heaven, leave its glories for a season to learn, from what is taking place in the earth, new songs of adoring praise.

Among us, if one discovers a star which no other observed before him, or writes a history of some nation, or accomplishes some literary or scientific achievement, he is straightway applauded as a man of genius and science, and among men he may be entitled to the distinction, nor do we by any means grudge him the honour; but, when like the philosophers of Greece, such an one begins to vaunt himself, and to despise Christ crucified as foolishness, it is high time to remind him that the angels who celebrated the creation of the very star which he has now discovered—the angels, any one

of whom knows more of the destiny of the world than all the men on earth together—the angels who lived in heaven thousands of years before he was born—instead of considering the cross of Christ foolishness, turn to it with admiration as an object which eclipses every other manifestation of divine glory! I apprehend their language would be similar to that of Paul, when speaking of the comparative excellence of the Jewish and Christian dispensations, "Creation is glorious indeed, but it has no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory (of the cross) that excelleth." But philosophers are not the only characters that see no excellence in the cross of Christ. We are surrounded by multitudes who can find in their daily worldly employments and amusements subjects of far keener interest. Oh! is it not wonderful, has it never struck you as surprising, that the angels who never sinned, happy although Christ had never come into the world, should yet feel more interested in the great salvation than the sinners for whom He died?

II. Consider now what, in the mysteries of redemption, makes the subject so deeply interesting to angels, *i.e.*, why do angels desire to look into these things? Here, then—

Negatively, it is not vain or impertinent curiosity. One of the considerations which induced Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit was that the tree was desirable to make one wise; she and her husband expected "to be as gods, knowing good and evil." They were discontented with the amount of information which God had been pleased to vouchsafe to them, and by unlawful means attempted to pry into what was forbidden. The same disposition continues to characterise their pos-

terity; while, on the one hand, we continue in a state of ignorance of those things which are of the highest importance, and which God has been mercifully pleased to reveal to us, we are on the other very prone curiously to search into what is not revealed, into what God purposely conceals from us. We are not diligent and anxious to be wise up to what is written and yet we often attempt to be wise about what is not written. Hence it was that when God descended on Sinai, He gave solemn injunctions to Moses to set a fence around the mount to prevent the people breaking through to gaze.

But such is not the disposition of angels. These exalted and pure spirits have such views of the infinite majesty of God as humble them in the dust. The mystery of redemption is to a certain extent unfolded to them, and so far as God has been pleased to make the revelation, they show their gratitude and admiration by studiously and earnestly contemplating it. But a step farther they presume not to go. Anything like an irreverent familiarity with God, anything like a scrutinising, arraigning spirit, so common, alas! among foolhardy creatures on earth, is utterly unknown among them.

Since, then, to speak more positively, it cannot be from a principle of vain or impertinent curiosity the angels desire to look into the mysteries of redemption, the question recurs—What is it that thus so deeply engages their attention? Were you, my friends, to see the ark of the testimony, and the cherubim intently looking upon the mercy-seat, and were you at the same time made aware of the spiritual import of these emblems, might not the wish very naturally arise in your breasts—"Would that the cherubim spake, that

we might know the subject of their thoughts, and the cause of their admiration, as they stand gazing on the wondrous mercy-seat!" Well, on one occasion they actually did speak. They did break silence—not the golden figures, but the angels themselves, which these cherubims represented. One night (Luke ii. 8-15), as certain shepherds were watching their flocks on the plains of Bethlehem, "the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said to them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest"—in the highest heavens, among the highest order of intelligences, who are the inhabitants of the high and holy place—"on earth peace, good-will toward men," *i.e.*, salvation to men! Such was the song of angels when they announced the incarnation of Him whom the mercy-seat typified; such, as we learn from their own lips, are the sentiments which fill their hearts and minds as they steadily contemplate the humiliation of Messiah, and the consequences of His sufferings.

As holy creatures, they derive their chief happiness from beholding the glory of God. In the history of redemption the divine glory is manifested in a manner so singular, so remarkable, as to attract the notice and admiration of angels, and to afford them a delight so great that with incessant and unwearied earnestness they

look into it. This indeed is one great end which was to be accomplished by the redemption of man. The Apostle informs us that the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the manifestation of Him who was the brightness of the divine glory—the great mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh—that this mystery which, from the beginning of the world, had been hid in God, was so revealed—that Christ was now seen of angels—for this among other reasons, that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. iii. 9, 10). And, further, the angels' song discovers to us likewise that they not only desire to look into the singular manifestation of the divine glory, but also that, as beings of the highest and most disinterested benevolence, they delight in contemplating the blessed consequences of the Redeemer's sufferings in the salvation of myriads of the human race. "Peace on earth," they say, "and goodwill to men." Thus are we furnished with a two-fold reply to the question, "Why do angels desire so earnestly to look into the sufferings and glory of Messiah?" They do so, first, because in these things they behold a peculiar manifestation of the divine glory; and, secondly, because, as benevolent beings, they rejoice in the salvation of sinners.

Let us inquire, then, how the scheme of redemption affords a manifestation of the divine glory even to angels.

Here we must bear in mind the character and attainments of these exalted spirits. There are many things which to children are matters of the utmost astonishment which excite no such surprise in persons of maturer years. Men, even prophets and apostles, are but children in comparison with these sons of the morning

creation. They are children in capacity compared with the elder sons of God. Were a person born and brought up in the retirement of the country to be introduced at court, made acquainted with the policy of the Empire and the affairs of the State, and were he shown the wonderful works of art with which the metropolis of a mighty empire abounds, he might very probably be overwhelmed with wonder, whilst persons born and bred in the metropolis would view them with comparative indifference. Now, the holy angels are the inhabitants of the metropolis of the universe, the city of the great King. They live and have always been in the court of the King of kings. If, then, the cross of Christ be an object which angels stoop from heaven to contemplate, if it be such as to rivet the attention even of these natives of heaven, who have for ages been favoured with various manifestations of the divine character, it can be no ordinary object. It must, if only in common with the other works of God, be glorious; but it must in some important respects excel in glory. What we have to inquire into, then, is the pre-eminence, the excellency, of the glory of redemption.

The mystery of redemption excels in glory because in it each particular attribute is more illustriously manifested than in any of the works of God. There are two circumstances which prevent us from experiencing the overwhelming astonishment on this subject which otherwise we certainly should. The one is the blindness of our minds, and our ignorance of the exceedingly rigid principles of the divine government. We are, as the Psalmist says, apt to think "God such an one as ourselves." The other is, that we are taught from our very infancy that God's own Son became man to save sinners;

hence this great truth is to us very much deprived of its novelty, and also of its moral grandeur. But this is not the case with angels. They lived before a Saviour was known or needed, and while they experienced the riches of the divine goodness, a mysterious dispensation had deeply imprinted on their minds a most awful sense of the divine justice and the purity of God. They had seen their own companions, once holy and happy as they were, presuming to sin against their Maker. The punishment of the crime seems to have instantaneously followed the commission of it. The rebels were expelled from heaven, and cast into outer darkness. They had seen the earth when she opened her mouth and swallowed up Korah and his company, and had heard their cry as they descended alive into the pit. Had you seen the fiery destruction which overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, had you seen the avenging waters of the deluge sweep away into perdition the myriads of an ungodly world, you might then have some faint conception of the feelings of awe and fear which filled the minds of the holy angels when they saw hell—that terrible and then unknown place—first open her jaws to receive the apostate spirits. Such a dispensation must have impressed their minds with a sense of divine purity, justice, and majesty, which nothing short of annihilation could erase. Conceive, then, if you can, with what sentiments of astonishment these celestial spirits must have witnessed this great and dreadful God, this consuming fire, assuming the character and the office of the Saviour of sinners. The Creator a creature! The Eternal an infant of days! The Omnipotent a man compassed with infirmities! The Supreme Law-giver made of a woman, made "under the curse" of a violated law! The Majesty of heaven and

earth an object of insult and derision to those very devils whom so lately His own right hand had hurled into hell! He who is emphatically the living One, the Author and the Prince of Life, stretched cold and lifeless in the tomb! And what I cannot but feel to be the greatest wonder at all, the Holy One—He whose absolute holiness angels adore with veiled face—submitting to have sin imputed to Him, to have sin brought into immediate contact with Him, to be charged with guilt—remaining speechless as if guilty, standing like a condemned criminal at the judgment-seat of God and man, to be numbered with transgressors, and suffering the vilest, the most ignominious of deaths, as if He were the very "chief of sinners"!

Every part of the work of creation displays skill and contrivance which manifest the Creator as the only wise God. But in the cross of Christ there is a hidden and mysterious wisdom which excelleth all. There are two ways in which a law can be honoured—one by rewarding the obedient, the other by punishing the disobedient. But through the sufferings of Christ the law of God is not only upheld simply in honour, it is actually more glorified by the salvation of the transgressor, who believes in Jesus, than it could possibly be by his condemnation (Rom. iii. 25). Sin is the greatest of all evils, the cause of all the suffering in the universe; but such is the wisdom of the cross that sin, the very essence of evil, is made the occasion of the greatest good. The Apostle says the foolishness of God is wiser, that is greater, than the wisdom of man. Through the cross it turns even the deepest laid devices of Satan into folly. How did the seed of the woman bruise the serpent's head? By power? No! but by weakness! By the

aid of His friends? No! but by the machinations of enemies! He let them have their will. He permitted them to seize, crucify, kill, bury Him; and it was in being thus defeated that He conquered. The ignominy of the accursed tree was His honour; His death was His victory. It was upon the very cross to which His enemies nailed Him in malicious triumph that He triumphed over principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly. "In the day ye eat of the tree," said Satan to Eve, "ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil," meaning, in his heart, that they should be such gods as he and his associates were, knowing good lost by the bitter experience of evil. But such is the wisdom of the cross, that the very lies of Satan are converted into truth, to his utter confusion. Holy angels know good only. Satan knows evil, and good only by its loss. But redeemed sinners knew, as their deceiver meant, good lost by the experience of evil; but now, through the bitterness of evil and the sweetness of good, they are made like the Son of God. Oh! how truly incomprehensible is that wisdom which devised a scheme by which seeming impossibilities are performed, and things seemingly incompatible are reconciled! A holy God reconciled with sinful man; the law more honoured in the salvation of sinners than it is either in the happiness of angels or the misery of devils; the greatest good extracted from the very essence of evil; Satan's schemes frustrated by their very success; the cross of Christ the instrument of his triumph; and the world, where God had been most dishonoured, made such a theatre of His glory as attracts the very inhabitants of heaven! Well might the Apostle exclaim, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

How astonishing is the power of that simple word which created the heavens and the earth out of absolute nothing! But how more wondrous far is the greatness of that strength in which the Redeemer travelled when He made bare His arm and came "mighty to save." "Who knoweth the power of thine anger!" said the Psalmist. Consider the manifestations of divine power which took place at the deluge, when the windows of heaven were opened and the fountains of the abyss were broken up, and the earth reeled and staggered like a drunken man. Contemplate the still more awful display of divine anger which shall take place on that day when the wrath of God shall be revealed from heaven, the elements melting with fervent heat, the heavens passing away like a scroll, the world in flames. Yet these are but the preludes of wrath. The flames of a burning world are but the glittering of the sword of divine justice when it is unsheathed. The devils are angels, and mighty angels, who excel in strength; but even they cannot endure the power of God's anger; it would annihilate them. They must endure it by degrees, and compensate by length of duration for an intensity of suffering which no created being could support. But the Man Christ Jesus endured the wrath of God alone, and to the uttermost. Oh, what tremendous manifestation of power was there! The Prince of Life, sinking to the dust of death beneath His Almighty Father's wrath! In other cases we contemplate God creating out of nothing, or doing His will with mere creatures which are supported by His hand. But here, we almost tremble as we speak it, we see a divine person inflicting a degree of suffering which nothing but the omnipotence of another divine person

could support. Well might angels contemplate with wonder the sufferings of Him who is "the power of God." What an awful display of divine justice, of divine purity, and of divine hatred of sin was there! High in rank as angels are, they are still but creatures. Here, however, the Lord of angels suffers. In their case it was the personally guilty who suffered. In Christ's, the personally innocent. He suffered for others, not for Himself. One might have imagined that His motive in suffering would disarm the hand of justice, that justice could not strike excellence so unparalleled. But such is the absolute inflexibility of this divine attribute, that when the Son of God Himself stood in the room of the guilty, He was not spared.

Once more, how infinitely does the cross of Christ transcend every manifestation of the divine love. What are the riches of the universe, of heaven itself in all its glory, in comparison with the Creator Himself—the unspeakable gift? They are but as the very dust of the balance—as dross, as nothing. "Herein is love" to make angels wonder. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The love of Christ in its length, and breadth, and depth, and height, is beyond the mighty grasp even of angels' comprehension.

Thus does redemption excel in glory, inasmuch as there is a wisdom in its contrivance, a power in its execution, a goodness in the deliverance wrought by it, and an infinite rectitude in the means by which the deliverance is accomplished, which immeasurably surpass all other manifestations of the divine perfections. The pre-eminent glory of redemption appears further,

in that excellencies which elsewhere are manifested separately are here combined. The works of creation afford abundant illustration of the wisdom and power of God; but the traces of His moral attributes are by no means so apparent therein. In heaven all exult in the goodness of God; but there is no practical display of His justice, and of the severer attributes of His nature. In hell God's justice and purity are awfully manifested. He appears as an offended King and Judge; but there is little evidence of His kindness as a Father who hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. Nor is there in this, you will observe, any discernible inconsistency. The miseries of a place of punishment may not directly illustrate the goodness of God, but they are not inconsistent with His goodness. The joys of heaven may not display God's anger, but neither are they inconsistent with His being angry. It is not an inconsistency, but rather a speciality in the occasion (as being a limited one from the very nature of things), in consequence of which there is but a partial illustration of the divine character. Now, the peculiar excellence in redemption, to which we at present call your attention, is that it is entirely free from any such imperfection; that it illustrates the divine attributes, not separately, but in combination, not partially, but fully. It not only exceeds each, but it combines all. On the Cross of Christ not only is divine justice more awfully illustrated than in hell itself, goodness more gloriously than in heaven, power and wisdom more illustriously than in the works of creation; but the Cross contains in itself all that is to be known of God in heaven, in earth, and in hell together. All the lovely tints of the rainbow that surrounds the throne blend here in purest, intensest light.

In the Cross of Christ the glory of God is manifested in all the colourless purity of meridian splendour.

The pre-eminence of redemption appears in its possessing a glory peculiar to itself, a glory found nowhere else. For anything we can learn from the Bible, an angel might traverse the vast extent of creation; he might, with the eyes of heaven, look into the depths of hell, and yet never discover that God was merciful, gracious, and long-suffering; that He both would and could pass over transgression and sin. Mercy seems to partake so much of human weakness that it might be deemed almost incompatible with the unsullied purity and unbending rectitude of the divine nature. But the Cross of Christ demonstrates that God is merciful; that though He be infinitely holy, even a consuming fire, He can, nevertheless, without tarnishing His purity in the slightest degree, endure with long-suffering the provocation of sinners; that although He be just and right, and without iniquity, He can, nevertheless, without deviating from the strictest rectitude, justify the ungodly. Nay, so far in this case is mercy from encroaching on purity, truth, justice, or any of those perfections towards which it seems most unfriendly, that these attributes are actually more glorified, more conspicuously illustrated than if mercy never existed. Never did judgment appear more awfully sacred and glorious than at the very time that "mercy rejoiced over it." But let us consider how such a manifestation could affect angels. For although they be sinless creatures, and therefore in no personal need of mercy, yet the fact that God is merciful is a discovery of very high interest and importance to them as well as to us. We cannot say that angels in a state

of innocence feel pain; yet when they considered the fate of their companions, and their own situation, they must at times have been filled with care approaching at least to painful apprehensions. They must have felt as if standing on the brink of a precipice—their footing not so secure, so firm, but a slight error might precipitate them irrecoverably—might infinitely remove them beyond the very possibility of restoration. God must have appeared to them utterly without mercy, incapable of anything like forbearance towards creatures—creatures certainly by no means incapable either of sinning or suffering—and this arising directly from the absolute perfection of His nature, as the polish and lustre of a diamond are due to its extreme hardness. In private life you may perhaps have met with a man of very high sense of honour—a man whom you would pronounce incapable of a mean or dishonourable action, but who, if you had inadvertently given him any cause of offence, would prove inexorable and unforgiving. In your intercourse with him, although his politeness and attention might be very agreeable while they lasted, you would yet be pursued by a disagreeable fear that they might be suddenly arrested. Something you may have thoughtlessly said has most unintentionally but too certainly given him great offence. The breach of friendship is irreparable, for he has no toleration for a failure of which he is himself incapable. Some such feelings as this—a feeling of the brittleness of the tenure by which they held their place, might sometimes have occurred to angels, an apprehension which the fate of their companions was by no means calculated to diminish. Now, the glory of redemption is that it removes all such painful apprehensions, so far as the character of the infinitely

holy God is concerned. The Cross demonstrates the blessed truth that God is not only a Sovereign of infinite majesty, and a Judge of inexorable righteousness, but that the great God has the heart of a Father; that He punishes, not because He has no feeling for the suffering of His sinful creatures, for "His Name is love," "He delighteth in mercy," "He has no pleasure in the death of a sinner," "and judgment is His strange work," but because the sovereign demands of righteousness in the all-supreme Governor require, when the occasion arises, that the irrevocable doom shall be pronounced.

Mercy, however, is His delight; what He does from choice—what it gives Him pleasure to do. Oh! with what sacred, what intense interest must angels have pondered testimonies to the divine character in terms like these—"As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11). "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him" (Ps. ciii. 13)—absolutely, unchangeably. Perfect as He is, He yet "knoweth and considereth the frame" of His creatures. "Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee" (Is. xlix. 15). "I could wish myself accursed for my brethren," said Paul, but God first took upon Himself the nature of man, and then actually made Himself accursed for His brethren. When Christ came near and saw the city of Jerusalem, He wept over it. Angels might indeed adore with profoundest awe the Eternal Majesty seated upon a throne, of which it is said that Justice and Judgment are its habitation. They might thank Him with all their heart

for His innumerable favours. But the Almighty God, in human nature, weeping over sinners—God in tears—is a sight which must have for ever enshrined Him in their hearts! This is the all-surpassing glory of redemption, a circumstance in which it indeed excels in glory.

God created the worlds by Jesus Christ; and Christ by His Spirit made the heavens (Ps. xxxiii. 6). But from the work of creation itself we could never have learnt the distinction of persons in the ever-blessed Trinity. By the work of redemption, however, the glorious distinction is made apparent. We are thereby admitted into a view of the divine nature which we could never have imagined nor comprehended otherwise. Not only God glorified generally, but each of the divine Persons manifesting forth His own peculiar glory.

Finally, the Cross excels in glory, because it illustrates, sheds a lustre on, everything else. The prophet says: "God created the earth not in vain, but he formed it to be inhabited" (Isa. xlv. 18)—which evidently intimates that, were the earth not inhabited it would in a certain sense be a world in vain. What would the world and all its contents be were it not for man, were it not that it ministers to the support and education of spirits who shall live for ever? Many objects derive an interest and importance from circumstances to which nothing in themselves gives them any title. The admirers of ancient history know well the enthusiasm which classic names and classic objects inspire; and it were easy to make mention of places and objects in our own country in themselves very insignificant, such as no traveller would think of observing, but they are hallowed in our remembrance—the spots where patriots have fought or martyrs have fallen—or where our ancestors, driven by

persecution from their homes, have met together to worship the God of their fathers. And that man is not to be envied who could walk unmoved throughout the highly favoured land where patriarchs wandered as strangers and pilgrims, where prophets delivered their predictions, where apostles first proclaimed the Gospel, where angels conversed with men, and where the Prince of Prophets and Apostles and Angels lived and died.

What Judah is to us, the earth is to the angels. Insignificant the world may be in itself, poor and worthless we its sinful inhabitants may be—but this is our glory, that the Creator Himself tabernacled for a time amongst us; that the earth we tread was trodden by Him; that the air we breathe was breathed by Him. Once it was man's highest glory that he was beautified with the image of God; but his glory now is that God Himself has become man.

The salvation of the Cross sheds a lustre on the dispensations of providence. What are those mighty empires which in our youthful days we were taught to admire? In Scripture they are denoted by the emblem of "beasts of prey." The page of history is filled with pictures of human ambition, tinselled by what is only the semblance of virtue. To our apprehension, on a review of those dim ages past, their instrinsic insignificance and vanity are perceived. But this speedily disappears when we recognise the ever-ruling providence of the Eternal Sovereign, who guides all events, however insignificant, in preparation for that kingdom which cannot be moved. The Cross makes heaven itself more glorious. It is the place where God confers on His people the rewards of the Redeemer's sufferings; whilst Hell is the place where are confined the enemies of the

Redeemer, the place to save men from which the Son of God died.

Angels, as beings of pure and disinterested benevolence, we have said, delight in contemplating the happy consequences of Christ's sufferings in the salvation of myriads of the human race. Amongst us superior privileges invariably excite envy. Joseph was greatly beloved and favoured by his father Jacob, and this exposed him to the envy and hatred of his brethren. Were angels in the least disposed to envy, they could find far greater reason for it than they. That a race of beings inferior to themselves should be so peculiarly honoured as that God Himself should take their nature into union with His own, would have been astonishing enough. But that this condescension should be exhibited towards sinful rebellious creatures, and that they should be exalted to an equality of rank and privileges with them, beings undoubtedly of higher order, would be peculiarly surprising, and that which, in fallen human nature, would have inevitably awakened feelings of jealousy and hatred. But angels have no pride of rank or of birth, for they greatly rejoice in the salvation of men and sinners. They rejoice in the addition of a new order of creatures to the heavenly society. They might have rejoiced at the prospect of this indeed at the creation of man; but the parables of the fifteenth of Luke inform us that the recovery of man, dead and lost, is, emphatically, their joy.

The general principles upon which a sinner of the human race is saved are precisely the same in respect to each individual. There is one common Saviour, one atonement, one faith, one hope; all are in this respect saved in the same way. But while there is thus but one

Spirit, there is a great diversity of operation, according to the peculiar circumstances and dispositions of individuals. This must have occurred to everyone who has read with interest the lives of Abraham, David, or any pious person, either recorded in Scripture or not. You cannot say, after concluding the life of any distinguished saint, that you have found one who is saved in a manner different from other sinners; nevertheless there is a peculiarity always in each case which gives us new and interesting views of the manifold grace of God.

Such is a specimen of the society of heaven. Are we fit for that society? Are we preparing for it? Or are we still under the influence of the malignant fallen angel? And are we content to be his wretched companions and captives for ever? What a reproof to the apathy of man is the deep interest which angels discover in the gospel! For us was the Saviour given—for us He suffered and died. To us has the word of salvation been sent and preached, yet what listless indifference do we manifest! What frivolous excuses do we make for that indifference! "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" "Kiss ye the Son lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way!"

Casting our Burden on the Lord

BY THE

Rev. ALEXANDER MACLEOD, Rogart (Formerly Uig, Lewis).*

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee."
—*Psalm lv. 22.*

We are all in a state of trial and probation for a permanent and eternal existence in another world. The space in which we move is but short at best, and by several circumstances very much contracted; but short and contracted as it is, scenes of the most weighty and important nature are transacted upon it. Man in his present fallen condition is truly forlorn. He is appointed to endure many severe afflictions, which he can neither foresee nor prevent. In the distribution of afflictions there is no doubt but the unerring wisdom acts, nor can chance have any place in His vast

* The Rev. Alexander Macleod was born at Balachladich, Stoer, in 1786. The Holy Spirit dealt with him early in youth. In 1818 he was licensed by the Presbytery of Tongue (Sutherland), and in the following year he was ordained minister of the Gaelic Chapel, Dundee; two years later he was translated to Cromarty. In 1824 he was inducted to the parish of Uig, Lewis. Spiritually, at this date, it was a barren wilderness, but under the divine blessing accompanying the Word preached it was to undergo an extraordinary transformation and become a fruitful garden of the Lord. The story of the extraordinary revival that swept over the parish and left an abiding influence has been often told. As a preacher of the

dominions, where even a sparrow falleth not to the ground without Him. It is true that in our short-sighted apprehensions the distribution appears very unequal, but humility and entire resignation are our bounden duties; for here we know but in part. Men's natural dispositions are as different as the complexion of their faces; nor can we imagine that the same measure of afflictions will answer the end of their discipline. Hence it is that among those who are evidently the children of God we see some whose heads continually hang down as the bulrush, while others have no severe dispensations comparatively to endure. Even among the wicked this seeming partiality may be discerned. There is no question, however, but the end of these different dispensations is that they may be disciplined and prepared for a state of infinite perfection, when all tears shall be wiped away from their eyes. Those for whom these afflictions have not answered these ends, but, like Pharaoh, harden themselves in wickedness, shall be left inexcusable. It often happens that the dearest and nearest child of God feels most of the bitterness of the rod; "in this world ye shall have

gospel, Mr Macleod was greatly beloved by the Lord's people. He dwelt on such truths as the glory of Christ's person, the virtue and efficacy of His sufferings, the perfection of His finished righteousness, and God's great love to sinners (*Some Noted Ministers of the Northern Highlands*, 211). Mr Macleod joined the Free Church in 1843, and the following year was called to Lochalsh. Two years later (1846) he was translated to Rogart, where he finished his course on 13th November, 1869, greatly beloved and revered by a people who honoured him as a true servant of Jesus Christ. The above sermon is taken from a booklet edited by the writer, *Diary and Sermons of the Rev. Alexander Macleod* (Inverness, 1925).

tribulation." We may rest assured, however, that there cannot possibly be one needless drop in their cup, for it is measured out by the unerring wisdom of their beneficent Father. A believer without afflictions and crosses has reason to doubt his sonship, "for He chasteneth every son whom He receiveth." Here the excellency of our holy religion appears, that it not only calls us to endure afflictions, but makes them productive of the most invaluable advantage to those who are exercised therein. The inspired penman of this Psalm had to endure not an ordinary measure of these afflictions, both before and after he became king over Israel, but he was not left destitute or unaided; he had experienced that God's strength was made perfect in weakness. From the experience he thus had of the divine help in every time of trouble he gives it as his advice to all in similar circumstances to follow the same method. With God there is no respect of persons. He is equally ready to succour and help the weakest believer as He was to help David; and when they follow the same course, "Out of weakness they are made strong." I presume there are some now present who have experienced the truth of God's promises, that His strength is made perfect in their weakness. There is none without his own burden. Some may think that there is none more uncomfortable than themselves; some may go so far as to suspect the safety of their condition, and speak bitter things against themselves. In order, by the divine blessing, to give some direction and help to these heavy-laden and weary souls, it is my design to show—

I. Some of those many burdens which every believer may be presumed to have.

II. How we are to cast these burdens upon the Lord, or what is implied in so doing.

III. Clear up the import of the promise: "He shall sustain thee."

IV. Practical inferences.

I would earnestly solicit the patient and attentive hearing of all who are now present, that they may have an opportunity of knowing whether they have a title to be numbered among the true disciples of Jesus, and hear Him invite them, saying, "Come unto Me."

I. Some of the burdens which every believer may be presumed to have. (1) Sin is a most grievous, a heavy and a dangerous burden. This is a burden we have brought with us into the world, and while we remain here, with which we must struggle. There are many who now hear me that may have no feeling of this burden; and how can they, seeing they are all in a spiritual sense dead in trespasses and sins. They have such a weight of sin upon them as will be more than sufficient (unless they are relieved from it) to sink them down to the lowest hell, and keep them there throughout the endless ages of eternity. Like a man immersed under water, who feels no weight from a quantity the hundred-thousandth part of which he would be unable out of the water to bear. But when the divine life is communicated by the Spirit of God, the feelings are restored to the once dead and insensible soul. While one is dead he is in the land of silence where no complaint is heard, but when life is restored the person feels and complains. The Apostle Paul informs us, that he was alive once without the law, that he thought

himself a good man, and wanted a feeling sense of the burden of sin, but when the commandment came sin revived and he died. The burden he had felt brought him down to the ground, he found himself unable to bear up under it. There was a strong and, on the part of the Apostle, an unavailing struggle; the soul now quickened felt the burden of sin, and unable either to bear it or extricate himself from it, he exclaimed: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." The body of sin had affected all the powers of his soul, and notwithstanding that it was deeply felt, he could do nothing towards rescuing himself (Rom. vii. 24). Nor was this peculiar to the Apostle only, he speaks the experience of all the people of God. Sin is their daily and most grievous burden. They would rise upon the wings of faith and make their escape from the world of troubles, but sin as a weight prevents them. They would hold spiritual converse with God, but sin intervenes. They would have their conversation in heaven, but sin prevents their mind from acquiring that spirituality of affection which is necessary for that employment. They would, with unwearied perseverance and daily advancement, go towards Sion as travellers to that happy country; but the burden of sin prevents them from making but a small progress. This burden is much more so to some than to others. And perhaps those sins which never come to light, yea, which they never committed, bear heavier upon them and prove their greatest burden. The Psalmist felt this burden (Ps. xxxviii. 4). Every believer does the same and longs exceedingly to be relieved from it, "he groans being burdened." We should, therefore, lay aside every weight and more

especially that sin which doth so easily beset us that we may run with patience (though not sinless) the race that is set before us (Hebs. xii. 1).

(2) The hiding of God's countenance from the soul is a burden, weighty and unsupportable, to the believer. Sin is not only the worst of evils in itself, but also the cause of all the other evils man is appointed to endure. It is matter of no small astonishment that we are in general so fond of our greatest tormentor. Among the other great evils which sin introduced into the world, that complete and universal alienation which it has made between the Creator and His creatures is by no means the least. This of itself is misery enough. There is no happiness for a rational being but in God. Sin made God, in whom is no enmity, an enemy to us; and man, in the constitution of whose original nature there was no enmity, is now enmity itself. Nor is this all; the highly-favoured few, who, through the mercy and free love of God in Christ, have been re-admitted into favour and intimate fellowship with Him, have reason with David to exclaim that God hides His countenance from them, and they are brought low. The soul-excruciating pain of desertion is felt by none except those who are admitted into nearness and fellowship with God, who upon some favoured seasons can say with the disciples, It is good for us to be here; and we may observe that the degree of distress wherewith the soul is affected upon the hiding of God's countenance, corresponds with the degree of intimacy enjoyed. Those who are only mere professors of religion desire no more of it than such a measure of knowledge as shall enable them to pass through the world with a reputation; but the sincere believer desires to have the life of religion, and the life

of religion is fellowship and communion with God, who is not the God of the dead, but of the living. This man alone can say that it is sweeter to him than honey, than the honey-comb (Ps. xix. 10). He has not only seen, but also tasted that the Lord is good. The life of faith is the Christian's life, but the communion with God which His people enjoy with Him upon some seasons depends not upon faith. They may have a faith's view of God when they have not an experimental communion with Him; so that we have here two distinct considerations. Sometimes the hiding of God's countenance refers only to one of these: we may have faith in exercise, when we are very low in our experience. This was the case with David, as he expressed it in Psalm xlii. New converts in the day of their espousals live more by experience than by faith. Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn while the bridegroom is with them? But the day is coming when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they mourn in those days. Hence we are not to imagine that God's providential care shall ever be withdrawn from His people: "My presence shall go with you, and I shall give you rest." But it implies that in our experience we are not uniformly to enjoy the same sense of His gracious presence, which upon some occasions we are permitted to enjoy. What a cloud came over the mind of the disconsolate disciples when Jesus was in the grave. Those who have been in similar circumstances can best tell. The reason why God thus withholds the influence of His Spirit in their experiences from His people is in some measure concealed from us. He giveth no account of any of His matters. We know that it proceeds from love. Some times it arises from unwatch-

ful or unguarded action of His people. They may have forgotten it, but when they feel their souls bereaved of comfort, they then confess that it is an evil thing and a bitter, that they have forsaken the Lord. Perhaps they may not discover the reason, and yet from God's dealings towards them they know they have offended Him. Like an obedient wife whose happiness depends upon the smiles of her affectionate husband, or a dutiful son who anxiously wishes to please his father, the believer would anxiously know wherein he has offended, and would suffer any infliction rather than to want the smiles of his father and his God. But I presume that some of the desertions of believers may arise from the infinite wisdom of God towards them, in order to prepare them for some extraordinary discovery of Himself, or some change that is to happen in their situation. But from whatever cause it arises, it is an uncomfortable situation, and when a believer comes the length of losing sight of his resignation as a duty he owes to God, it becomes intolerable (Ps. lxx.).

(3) The believer's doubts as to his interest in the benefits of the everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure, is another heavy burden. As another evil consequence of sin, we are under sentence of condemnation to the holy and good law of God, having lost our ability of giving that perfect obedience which it requires. We are, therefore, upon the terms of the first covenant outcasts, and have most justly forfeited every claim to any of the benefits we had secured to us in the covenant. The last breath we draw is only from the unmerited goodness of God. But the Lord was pleased to establish with His people in Christ a new and unalter-

able covenant. In this covenant the forfeited right and lost blessings are restored. They are sure to all the seed, and they have as unquestionable a title to them as Adam in innocence had to all that God promised him. That this covenant is made with Christ and ratified by His blood is every believer's salvation and all his desire. But if the covenant is made with Christ as head and representative of His people, it is but just and reasonable that while He stands according to the stipulations of the covenant, those who are interested in it, for whose sake He entered into such an engagement, should be partakers of the benefits of the covenant. Unless this had been the case, to speak with reverence, we could not say that justice would be done to the covenant Head. We find, therefore, that there is no believer but receives these covenant blessings. It is also the first concern of every Christian to know in whom he has believed, and to taste of covenant love in covenant mercies. This is as unquestionable an evidence and much more so than if an angel came from God with the same message with which he came to the blessed Virgin. Yea, it is as certain as if God with an audible voice declared that one is a child of the covenant. Covenant benefits can only come to the children of the covenant. The children's bread cannot be given to dogs. Christ undertook and accomplished the work for those that the Father had given Him from eternity. Nor need any one examine into this secret mystery; let him rather know if his state bespeaks him to be among the redeemed of the Lord Jesus. There are some who have no doubt on their minds but they are God's children in the covenant of grace. It becomes them to take heed how they walk. There are others, and the greatest number,

who, notwithstanding that they are as certainly interested in the covenant as the former, can scarcely believe it. They dare not say, but they may be; but they dread they are not. They are prevented from utter despair, but they are often on the brink of that pit. This is a most severe burden, and naturally resulting from the former. These doubts arise from within and from without. The experience of sin and sinful corruptions working from within; the promises so completely locked up that the believer dares not look to them. Unbelief and the evil suggestions of Satan will misrepresent the promises, and even doubt their veracity (Ps. cxvi. 11). When he considers the advanced state of other believers, he does rejoice, but instead of being encouraged, he rather concludes that, were he one of God's children, he would partake of their privileges. He can find no parallel to Himself among the people of God: he often repents and bitterly laments that ever he presumed to take the children's bread. This is a most unsupportable burden to an awakened soul, who knows and firmly believes that there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby he can be saved, but that of Jesus alone. These doubts and dismal apprehensions may be in part constitutional. They are, however, in some degree or other felt by true believers. They should be cast upon the Lord. He shall sustain us. The manner of casting them upon Him comes to be considered under another head: but let none imagine that this case is peculiar to him alone. It is the lot of many of God's children. Be not content, however, in the condition, but believe that you may be a child of the covenant, although you may not have the appearance of it. Distinguish yourself from

the formal hypocrite by not contenting yourself with a probability, but aspiring to a certainty.

(4) Their duties are a burden to believers. This may on first hearing surprise some who are not acquainted with the experience of believers. But to make this in their view a greater paradox, their duties are their burden and their pleasure. They feel an ardent, growing desire for the duties of their holy faith as they advance in the spiritual life. But their minds are enlightened to see and believe the immaculate holiness and spotless purity of God. They know that He is a Spirit, and they that serve Him acceptably must do it in spirit and in truth. They, on the contrary, find themselves under the influence of carnal and dead affections: they mourn after that fervour and warmth in devotion, which, though it cannot recommend them to the favour of God, would indicate the indwelling habitation of His Holy Spirit. They would do good, but evil is present with them. They would go unto God as their chiefest joy and glory in Him, but they find a deadness and indifference. Even their most solemn duties, where they expected comfort, are rendered uncomfortable to them by the intrusion of vain thoughts; and sometimes they retire from the house of God much more burdened in this respect than when they have entered it. They are often in a strait between two: they fear that their duties may provoke the Spirit of God to withdraw, and yet they cannot refrain from duties. Nor is this occasionally: some even complain that they have reason to fear that no duty of the Christian life had ever been rightly performed. They sometimes doubt their sincerity; and any commendation

from men grieves and humbles them. They exclaim from a sense of deadness: "Awake, O north wind, and come thou south."

(5) The temptations of Satan are a burden to believers. In this wilderness of their pilgrimage the people of God are exposed to many hardships; they are in themselves a poor, defenceless people. Among other things which make their journey through life often uncomfortable, they must feel the stings of fiery flying serpents. The Apostle's complaint, in the experience of every child of God, holds still true, "And we are not ignorant of his devices." There are some of God's people who have more discernment than others to know his temptations. There are some who from their natural temper and other circumstances are less exposed than others. Some, from a long experience of his attacks, are not much disconcerted, at least till he makes use of new methods. Some are tempted to such abandoned vices as they would not communicate to their nearest connections or their most confidential friends. They find their hearts contrary to their wishes open to his attacks. They find, even, in the most solemn part of their duties, that the heart, by the evil suggestions of the enemy, is carried away. Nay, sometimes they are compelled to abandon a commanded duty. They hear his secret whisperings carrying away their attention. They pray against it and yet their smart is not eased. Upon some occasions they have relief, but after that his temptations are renewed with redoubled fury. The more seeming relish and zeal they discover for Christ they are the more distressed by the cunning and craft of the old serpent. Cast this burden upon the Lord.

(6) The present melancholy and unpromising state of the Church of Christ and its members is another grievous burden to the believer. It is an undoubted evidence of a Christian temper, to have his mind expanded and enlarged by universal philanthropy for all men. Every true believer is of a public spirit, yea, the cause and glory of Christ concerns him much more than his own private interest and even his eternal salvation. Seeing that he has a union with Christ and the members of his mystical body, he has a particular and abiding concern for his mother, the church. Thus we find the believing soul expressing himself in Song viii. 2. We justly despise that son who denies and disregards the influence which natural affection has over him; nor can the most dutiful attention repay the care and painful distress of a mother. It is no less unnatural for children of the same family to be indifferent about one another's welfare. Between Christ and believers who are begotten by the gospel, there is a much more intimate relation. They are members of one body. They are under the influence of one Spirit, they are children of one family. They are joint heirs with Christ, of the same glorious hope. Every believer feels an interest in the Church of Christ. He rejoices over it, and mourns when the cause of Christ is not triumphing. When he perceives the marks of an angry God towards the Church; when he sees judgments drawing nigh, when he sees Satan successful, then is his time to encourage, warn, and admonish, earnestly, and unceasingly imploring the return of God's favour and His exercising protection over His Church. There is much reason to mourn and lament over the cause of God in our days. Who that is in any measure animated by the

same Spirit but will unite with the weeping prophet in Jer. ix. But although the union of believers with one another exceeds that of natural affection, it by no means eradicates it. On the contrary, it raises it to a degree of which a natural person is never susceptible: it begets a concern for the immortal part. It not unfrequently happens that godly persons have very ungodly and wicked relatives. Adam had a Cain in his family, Aaron had a Nadab and Abihu, David had an Absalom, and in the Saviour's own family there was a Judas. And in general many of the people of God have cause to complain that their house is not right with God. In the distribution of God's grace it happens in families and congregations that while one is taken, the other is left. This must be matter of grief to the believer, and the more intimate the connection the heavier the burden. Cast this burden also upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.

(7) Poverty is a burden to believers, notwithstanding that the Lord has in a great measure alienated the affections of believers from earthly to heavenly objects; and that they expect to be made happy only when that which is in part shall be done away, yet they must feel like other men the ills of life. They are in general a poor, despised, and afflicted people. "Not many noble, not many mighty are called." From the present unrelenting state of men's mind they have in their view little lenity to expect. There is, in most cases, no mercy for a poor man. "The rich have many friends." It is likely the believer many times knows not to what hand to turn for relief. He may have others depending on him, and sees nothing wherewith to provide for

them. This is a burden grievous to be borne. It may sometimes stagger the faith of a confirmed believer. The affliction wherewith his family is visited heightens the distress. In similar circumstances we find the Israelites upon their crossing the Red Sea. They had no prospect of support; they were always to move forward, and even should they settle, the wilderness would give them no maintenance. But the Lord had provided for them. If many of us had been present, it is most probable we should have joined them in their murmuring against God and Moses. Cast this burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee. "They that truly seek the Lord shall not want any good."

(8) Lastly, the want of a burden is a most grievous and weighty burden. However strange this may seem to some present, this is the most unsupportable of all the burdens we have mentioned. It is so in its own nature, and more especially as it unfits us for having it removed. Owing partly to the believer's constitutional habits, the delusion of sin, the temptations of Satan, and the corruptions of his own heart, he finds himself in a state which he cannot describe. There is such a deadness and indifference seizing him that he cannot with any degree of precision trace any work of grace in his soul; any corruption, any need of a Saviour, any danger, any desire for an alteration of state, and yet he feels a most uncomfortable uneasiness in that situation. In this state such indifference may take hold of him, that unless restrained by the unseen agency of God, he would commit any sin to which he is tempted. But in the goodness of God Satan is restrained in a great measure. The believer would mourn and lament his sins before God, but he cannot. He would pray, but knows not

how. He would meditate, but knows not on what. He would believe, but feels himself under an utter inability. Sin, like a delirious fever, has seized all his soul, and he can scarcely feel or describe anything in its true light. We should be cautious that we do not create such a state for ourselves. Cast thy burden upon the Lord.

II. How we are to cast these burdens upon the Lord. Man, in consequence of his apostacy from God, labours under the most deplorable inability in a moral sense. Any one of these burdens we have enumerated would be more than sufficient to prevent his ever arriving at that rest which remaineth for the people of God. But blessed be God we are not left to have an unavailing struggle with difficulties. We have a mighty One as our defence, and underneath are the everlasting arms. To encourage our approaches, He has assumed human form, and most graciously bore Himself all these burdens. This makes a faithful and fellow-feeling High Priest. This of itself must be matter of encouragement for feeble and helpless sinners. But they are not left to conjecture. He condescends in the most endearing unequivocal manner to invite them to His pardoning, refreshing, and supporting mercy, much readier to communicate strength than they are to ask Him. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28). In this state of trial and difficulties we groan, being burdened, but we labour not alone. The Angel of the Covenant that appeared unto Jacob in the way is ever present with us. But there is such humility and condescension in God towards sinners that they find a difficulty in believing it possible—"Dost thou wash my feet?"

There is no question but God is more than sufficient to uphold the most disconsolate believer under the heaviest burden which any is doomed to labour under. But the difficulty rests on his own part. That impotency which incapacitated him for bearing up under his burdens disables him also from casting them upon the Lord. There are two hands wherewith the believing soul should cast his burdens upon the Lord: these are faith and prayer. If at any time, which often happens, one of these begins to fail, it must be cast by the other, and sometimes their joint efforts must be exercised. Like as Moses and the inferior judges managed the concerns of the children of Israel. I speak not of counterfeits. Both these must be inseparable if they be of the genuine kind. Faith may sometimes be weak, but prayer may be had recourse to in all cases. Prayer must be offered in faith; but it may be the prayer of faith, when faith itself is not in exercise. Faith, likewise, partakes of the nature of prayer. In any and in every situation when we have recourse to these, they prove effectual. There is no burden which we may groan under but can be supported in this manner. How comfortable may the soul who has freedom of access to God in prayer be in any situation. And I may appeal to the experience of some who now hear me that, not infrequently, they had approached a throne of grace bitterly complaining of their many hardships and trials; but, if in the goodness of their God, they have been admitted to any intimacy there, they find themselves eased of their burdens and possessed of unexpected strength for their Christian course. A burden can never bear too heavy upon the believer while he has freedom of access to God, to make known unto Him all his complaints.

III. What is implied in this promise—"He shall sustain thee?" This does not imply that a belief in the all-sufficient, all-free grace of God in Christ should make us more careless in our walk through the world. This would be to sin, because grace doth abound. If a man be rescued from sudden destruction by the benevolent exertions of another, should this induce him to expose himself to the same danger, even should his former benefactor stand by; and surely no man in his sober senses would be so mad. This imputation upon the doctrines of free grace is the most unfair and unjust that can be conceived. The clearer and firmer a believer's assurance in the favour and protection of God is, the greater watchfulness and circumspection does this beget in him. Neither does this promise imply that when we cast our burdens upon the Lord we ourselves are henceforward to go free. This would not be to consult our good, which God uniformly does. Such is the corruption and deceitfulness of the human heart that did we but for any length of time want something to humble us, we should in a short time turn wanton against the Lord, and bring upon ourselves the sorest burdens. For there are no burdens so severe as those which we have brought upon ourselves by our unwatchfulness. The promise, therefore, does not run in this way. You shall be free, but He shall sustain thee, labouring under the burden and often ready to fear that you shall fail. But the promise implies—

(1) That no unnecessary burden shall be laid upon us, that even a dog cannot bark against us without permission. The Lord is infinitely wise; He does not proportion our burdens according to our resolutions, but

according to our danger; and what He has designed for us, or what He is to do by us. There are many who may suppose that a less burden might serve, and that should he have easier burdens he might make a greater progress in the Christian life. But this proceeds from ignorance. A little acquaintance with your heart will convince you that even the measure of affliction you have is scarcely sufficient for keeping down the pride and haughtiness of your heart. They are all measured out by infinite wisdom. They are necessary for preserving us right in our journey through life, lest we might make a shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience; and though we may not know it now, we shall know it hereafter. For we are yet but children in knowledge; nor do we know what the wisdom of our Father intends for us. He shall sustain us; and surely, if we must be indebted for strength, we should leave the manner to Himself.

(2) This implies that we shall have every necessary direction and discipline under these burdens. When we have at first engaged in the Christian course, we are impatient of restraint: we think that nothing but comforts and uninterrupted communion and fellowship with God is to be enjoyed. But we have not gone far when we find that we are not yet made perfect. We must undergo a discipline here that we may arrive safely and qualified for the enjoyment of the higher house. When we begin the Christian life we may have many struggles. Ephraim most emphatically compares himself to a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke (Jer. xxxi. 18). The untoward disposition of his heart was much severer than the service to which he was called. The Lord shall

teach His children this discipline until they are at length brought to rejoice and joy in tribulation. They bear the yoke not of constraint, but of a willing mind. They are under the tuition of infinite wisdom and unalterable love.

(3) This promise implies that they are perfectly secure under every burden, and that at length they shall be delivered out of them all. He shall sustain thee. He, who is the Almighty, He who is Lord of Hosts; all thy burdens are under His immediate inspection; yea, they are ordered by Himself: "Fear not, for I am with thee, be not afraid, for I am thy God." While there is omnipotence in Jehovah to sustain a fellow-feeling and grace in Christ, and the fellowship of the Spirit, the true and sincere believer cannot fail. It is true that even the most sincere believer is but weaker than frailty itself; but the appointing of the burden for believers belongs to God: troubles arise not out of the dust. Omnipotence itself cannot lay any burden which itself is not able to bear. Pray not then, O believer, that thy burden may be removed or even lightened, but in a consistency with infinite wisdom, well knowing that though of yourself you are insufficient, yet your sufficiency is of God: "His grace shall be sufficient for you, for His strength is made perfect in weakness." But think not that even God Himself is to support you under these afflictions always. He has a nobler service for you yet in the higher house. Even while we are supported under afflictions, and they are thus joyous, there is a desire of deliverance natural to man. This time of redemption draweth nigh. The end of the journey will ease us. Our salvation is nearer than when we have believed. Who would grudge a few

trials and difficulties, if need be, in this world when there is the more unquestionable certainty of a sudden and certain deliverance. More especially when we reflect that these very distresses shall enhance the value of the enjoyments, and that they are, moreover, one chief means whereby we are prepared for heaven. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17).

IV. Practical inferences. (1) Hence we may remark what an inestimable privilege the gospel of Jesus is. It has among many other advantages given us clear and comprehensive notions of that great Being whose we are, and whom we serve. It has made Him, who was formerly little more than an object of terror, an object of love and unshaken confidence. Believers can now contemplate His adorable perfections, and see them in the face of Jesus all exercised on their behalf encouraging their hearts, and giving them good hope and consolation through grace. Nor can any one consider God out of Christ but as an object of terror; on the other hand, connected with this knowledge of God is our happiness. Let the advantages we enjoy be duly estimated.

(2) Hence, we may learn the true cause of our disquietudes and anxious fears. It is true that we must suffer many things in this our probation state. These are not, however, the cause of our fears. Our fears do not arise either from our sufferings or wants. Many of our fellow mortals had these to endure, and yet they were not cast down, but rejoiced in them. There is none who is in the least acquainted with the history of

the saints but will know this. Have we not the same unchangeable God? Is not His goodness, His power, wisdom and love equally free to us as to them, and yet we do not find such unshaken confidence? The reason is plain, they had more real intimacy with God; were much more exercised by afflictions than we are, yet they fainted not because they believed that underneath were the everlasting arms. It is necessary in order to constitute God an object of dependence, that there be a special revelation of Him to us as individuals.

(3) Have we cast our burdens upon Jehovah? This is an important question. Sooner or later we shall all feel the need of Him. But unless it is done as an act of the will, with the consent of the mind, we should not imagine ourselves safe. A reliance upon God is the believer's privilege.

(4) A word to those who have unshaken confidence and freedom of access to God. They should walk circumspectly, lest they may in their experience deprive themselves of this greatest of all blessings. They should, also, have compassion upon those that weary themselves for very vanity. They should bear with the weak. They should guard against self-sufficiency.

(5) Those, who entertain doubts of an interest in God and cannot say whether they have laid their burden upon Him, should examine whether He has done anything for them in time past from which they may comfortably conclude that they are objects of His peculiar care. They should, also, endeavour to commit their ways unto God, and, having done so, to leave the issue with Him. They should often contemplate the unchangeableness of God their Saviour.

(6) Lastly, a word to hypocrites and self-secure sinners. It happens often that those who have least cause are the most seemingly comfortable. But their joy is like the crackling of thorns under a pot; it shall be turned into sorrow. They should examine upon what their confidence is founded. If they would but listen to the voice of conscience it would inform them that it is nothing more than presumption. Real trials and severe difficulties are before them. Let careless sinners also consider the awful situation wherein they stand. Consider what is said, and the Lord give you understanding.

Through the Wilderness to the City

BY THE

Rev. CHARLES CALDER MACKINTOSH, D.D., Tain.*

"And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation."—*Ps. cvii. 7.*

It is soothing and delightful to believe that, amidst the wickedness and disorder that prevail in the world, the God of redemption is ever carrying on His own mighty purposes. He has, as He ever has had, and ever will have, a Church on earth whose interest is dear to Him, and for the promotion of whose welfare all the events of His providence are ordered. For her sake our world is preserved; when she is complete, and all her scattered members are gathered in, the purpose of its continued upholding will be accomplished. She is founded upon a rock, on the immoveable basis of Immanuel's merit

* Dr Charles Calder Mackintosh was the son of Dr Angus Mackintosh, and was ordained assistant and successor to his father, 19th June, 1828. Dr Kennedy said of him: "Of all I ever met, he was the one to whom I found it easiest to open up my heart, and at whose feet I was at the same time most inclined to sit. He won my heart, and commended my respect as no one ever did. I never came in contact with a more highly disciplined mind and a more chastened spirit. Eminently endowed, an accomplished theologian, he was the humblest I ever knew; shedding the savour of godliness around him wherever he moved." The above sermon is taken from Taylor's *Memorials of the Life and Ministry of Charles Calder Mackintosh.*

and power; and therefore against her the gates of hell shall not prevail. The arm that protects and the eye that guides her are indeed unseen; but their influence is not the less felt by her. Nor is she now less protected and guided by God than when the pillar of cloud and of fire preceded her in her journey, pointing out her path and encouraging her to pursue it. There is a covenant to which God ever has respect in all the arrangements of His providence; a covenant which guarantees her continued existence despite of all opposition, and her preservation in the darkest and most cloudy day; her gradual and slow but sure extension, and her final and triumphant completeness. She is now not less surely one than in the days of Moses, and not less surely the object of God's unceasing care in her journey to Canaan. Kings still reign or are dethroned, nations still flourish or fall for her sake; the hearts of all are still in God's hands; His power, and His love, and His purpose are unchanged. Through difficulty, danger, and opposition she is safely conducted, nor will His guidance cease till she become the Church triumphant. She may be in a low and suffering condition; her path may be that of trouble and affliction; but she is ever guided by the right way that leads to the city of habitation. Men speculate wildly on the course of events, unconscious or unwilling to acknowledge that they all tend to one great object—the gathering in of God's scattered family from all nations, and the final triumph of His despised and persecuted Church.

Now, what is thus true of the Church in general is equally true of its members individually. They are the children of the same Father; and numerous and widely separated though they be, His favour and His protection

are extended in the same measure to all of them. The poorest and the meanest of the true Israel of God is, in all the varied circumstances of his condition, and in all the chequered scenes of his life, the object of His special regard and His holy guidance. To others he may be an object of pity and contempt, and to himself he may be a wonder at all times, and not seldom the unconscious possessor of such a privilege; yet he is not the less surely its possessor, and not the less unceasingly led forth by the right way to the city of habitation.

In order to arrive at any conception, however faint, of the full meaning of this beautiful passage, we must view it as spoken of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Leader and Commander of His people, the Captain of salvation. It is by His blood the Church is purchased and cleansed. It is He who in His fathomless and eternal love gave Himself as a ransom for her, and it is He who as her Forerunner has entered within the veil and claimed for her, as the reward of His surety-work, the incorruptible inheritance. It is He whose property she is by right, by gift, by purchase, by conquest. It is He who is her elder Brother and her Bridegroom; it is on His shoulders that the government is laid, and it is to Him that all power is given in heaven and on earth, that so He may "see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." It is He who has marked out the path in which she must follow Him; it is His Spirit that guides her into it and preserves her in it. It is under the covert of His blood that she is first conducted into it, and that her continued safety is found. It is through His Word and His ordinances that her continued supplies of enlightening and refreshing and sanctifying grace are communicated. In His hands are her times of joy and sorrow, of comfort

and trial. It is His arm, the arm that wrought out her salvation, that secures her the victory over the assaults of earth and of hell. And it is clothed with His righteousness and beautified with His salvation that she is at length to be presented faultless before the presence of His glory, to dwell with Him for ever in the city of habitation.

Let us endeavour, then, in dependence on promised grace, to notice, first, some of the characteristics of this way by which the great Leader of His people conducts them; secondly, let us consider it as the right way; and, thirdly, let us contemplate its glorious termination, the city of habitation to which it leads.

I. The characteristics of the way. 1. We may view it, in the first place, as leading through a wilderness. The Christian's state in this world is one of pilgrimage. "These all," says the Apostle, "confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers on the earth" (Heb. xi. 13). This is not the Christian's rest; it remaineth for him. Here he dwells in tents and tabernacles. In his best state he can but contemplate afar off and long for the promised possession. When his faith is most vigorous and his love most ardent, he must still forget the things that are behind, and press forward. When his day is most unclouded, his hope most lively, his joy most abundant, he must still hear the voice addressed to him, "Arise, and go hence." Here is not his portion or his inheritance. The men of this world have their portion in it; his inheritance is reserved for him—an incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance; a fitting gift for the Lord of Glory to bestow on His Son's "joint heirs." This is not his home. He is here at a distance from his Father's house, travelling to a far country. It

is by faith he walks, and not by sight. His citizenship is in heaven; he is of the household of God. The world is a strange land to him; it acknowledges a Master whom he disowns, and sources of happiness which he renounces as delusive. Its objects of dependence are to him lying refuges. It cannot enter into his feelings; it cannot sympathize with him in his joys or his sorrows, his hopes or his desires, his views or his aims. It looks at the things that are seen and temporal; his faith looks beyond to those things which are unseen and eternal. It grasps at present shadows; his faith gives substance to hoped-for blessedness. He has no common interest with it; he treads in a different path, and pursues an opposite end. Its end will be destruction, his end will be glory. Nay, this world is as a wilderness to the Christian pilgrim; it is barren of all that can satisfy the desires of his heart, or make him truly blessed. It cannot minister peace to his conscience, balm to his diseased soul, or satisfaction to his longing holy desires. Its peace and its comfort are not for him. Vanity of vanities he sees inscribed on all created objects, and sin and guilt in a surrender of the heart to them. To speak thus of the world, with its gaieties and fascinations, may sound harshly in the ears of its votaries. But the language of Scripture is plain, pointed, and decisive: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." If the Christian's treasure is in heaven, and if his heart is there, then surely we are rash and presumptuous in appropriating the sacred name if our treasure and our heart are in the world. The desire of another and a better country is altogether incompatible with the love of this present evil world.

The cry of "vanity of vanities and vexation of spirit" is indeed not an uncommon one. It is often wrung in the bitterness of disappointed hope from the carnal unsatisfied heart. But until eternity be fixedly contemplated in all its bearings on our happiness and misery, and until a God in Christ be recognised and felt by us as the source of all our blessedness, repeated disappointments will never induce us to give up our vain pursuit of happiness in the creature. Again and again we shall return to it till death and the grave find us still crying out, "Who will show us any good?" We may distrust the world, we may expect but little from it; and yet we may still be as utterly destitute of the spirit of pilgrimage as those who glory in their shame, and openly avow that they care not for the future, and that while they are in the world they will endeavour to enjoy it. We may still despise the pleasant land. The world may still be to us a weary land only because it has disappointed us, and not because, perceiving its vanity, we look forward to another and a better.

But Christ implants the spirit of pilgrimage in those whom He leads forth into the right way; discovering to them the emptiness of the creature, making known to them spiritual wants which the world can never supply, exciting in them desires which no created objects can gratify. Such discoveries come not alone, and such desires do not in vain seek for gratification: if it were so, the Christian would be in this world of all men the most miserable. The most trembling and desponding pilgrim Zionward has in him that blessed hope of eternal life, which, however unconsciously, will continue to animate till it be lost in fruition; a hope, the necessary attendant of holy faith, and having for its object deliver-

ance from the body of sin, perfect restoration to the likeness of God, and His full and everlasting communion; founded not on any internal experience, but on the promises of a faithful God in Christ Jesus. He who has but just entered on his pilgrimage, he in whose heart the spark of grace glows most feebly, has yet desires wrought in him which nothing less than the holy blessedness and communion of heaven can satisfy. It is not indeed at once that the barrenness of this world in all that can worthily fill the mind or the heart is fully perceived by the pilgrim. Christ was the only perfect pilgrim. He alone was truly unspotted from the world. Fully and perfectly to exhibit the character of a pilgrim is not the attainment of the most exalted of His followers. The faith that gives substance to hoped-for blessedness is encountered by unbelief, which represents it as shadowy and unsubstantial; the hope that incites to press forward to its enjoyment is met by chilling despondency and fear; and the holy desire that pants for its full gratification, by deadening, withering carnality. But wherever the spirit of pilgrimage is implanted, there it never wholly dies away. And therefore it is that the Christian is never permitted to settle down in this world as if it were his home; but despite of the suggestions of unbelief and carnal reason, despite of the proneness of his heart to go after its covetousness, and despite of the ensnaring example and practices of the world, he still feels that he is here in a wilderness-condition. It is a part, and not the least precious part, of his great Leader's conduct and management to correct him when he goes astray, and to remind him painfully and practically that this is not his rest, and that he must not view it as such. It is his privilege to have his heart's

dearest idols thrown down, to have his fairest worldly hopes blasted, to have the emptiness of the creature in a thousand different ways discovered to him. It is his privilege to feel an aching void in his heart which this world can never fill, to be kept deeply sensible of wants that created good cannot supply, and to be led by a hard and rugged path as often as his treacherous, idolatrous heart would have him take his ease. He is thus enabled to go up out of the wilderness with his face towards the heavenly Canaan.

2. But the nature of the Christian journey will appear more fully if we consider his way, secondly, as leading not merely through a strange land, but through an enemy's country. The Christian path is one of conflict. Our blessed Lord calls Satan the prince of this world. "The course of this world" is a practical recognition of Satan's daring and rebellious claims of independence and uncontrolled dominion. It is the acknowledging of a rebel who is branded with the curse and visited with the awful indignation of the King of kings and Lord of lords. For the present, it is his fearful eminence to be permitted, in the unsearchable arrangements of God, to claim this world as his own. He works in all the children of disobedience, leading them captive at his will, and holds undisputed sway in their breasts. These know no other conflict than that which their own unbounded passions excite within them —a conflict between the fear of punishment and the love of sin. But they who are led forth by the right way have a hard battle to fight and to win ere they reach the city of habitation. Their Leader and Commander came to destroy the works of the devil; and, as His followers,

they are called to resist, and to hope for victory over, His and their enemy. The prince of this world likes not to have his authority disputed. He places himself in the Christian's path, resolved to resist his advance. He presents himself at will either as an angel of light or in his real character of prince of darkness. He now says, "Take thine ease," and again, "There is a lion in the path." He is not slow to discover or to profit by advantages. The backsliding of the Christian is a feast to his soul, because it brings reproach on God's holy name. He has a host of wicked spirits ready to receive his commands and to obey his will. Yet the conflict would be comparatively light had not Satan other and powerful allies. He has the world—that world that lies in the wicked one, with its broad way that leadeth to destruction, ensnaring and tempting the Christian in every step of his progress to adopt its practices, to yield himself to its pleasures, and forget in them the cares and anxieties of his journey. But he has a more powerful ally still, one without whose aid the Christian would at all times bid him defiance. He has the flesh, indwelling sin, the remains of his own dark image in the soul, which he can contemplate with complacency, with which he can communicate, and with whose help he can forge darts of very fire and malice. With such malicious intentions, and thus supported, he comes forth to the battle against the Christian pilgrim.

But greater is He that is with him than all they that can be against him. If the way to the city of habitation is a way that must be fought—if the battle must be won ere the crown of righteousness can be given him—he is not sent out to the conflict unprovided for it. It is his honour and his security to fight under the banner of

the Captain of Salvation. Because he is on the Lord's side, earth and hell cannot prevail against him. He is furnished from the armoury of heaven with armour of proof, with which to resist and stand, and advance and overcome. Faith is his girdle, righteousness is his breastplate; his feet, in travelling over the rugged way, are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; on his head is the helmet of salvation; in his left hand is the shield of faith; in his right the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Thus armed, he engages in a conflict, deadly, infinitely diversified, and admitting of no truce. This conflict continues to the end of the Christian course. The saint nearest heaven must still as surely fight the good fight as the soldier of yesterday. For the enemy will resist and hold out to the last: he shrinks not from the encounter with the most approved and tried veteran. When the good soldier has all but unbuckled his armour, when the gates of heaven are opened to receive his parting spirit, he will still assail him; nor will his harassing though vain assaults cease till their object is snatched for ever from their influence, and admitted to a kingdom where temptation, conflict, and sorrow are unknown. Not till then will the Christian lay down his armour, to rejoice in the prize.

3. Let us consider the way by which Christ leads forth His people to the city of habitation as a way of trial and affliction. (1) We have already alluded to one fruitful cause of pain and trial to the Christian: the assaults of his spiritual enemies. The world, with all its growing knowledge and intelligence, still lies in the wicked one, and still hates the image of the holy unoffending Lamb of God. And he who is a faithful witness, and who is anxious in every situation to approve

himself as a follower of the Lord Jesus, and to be kept from the world's pollution, is still the object of its taunts and revilings. The temptations of Satan are a cause of pain to him. There are no doubt some to whom it pleases the Lord to give a more keenly extensive acquaintance with his devices than others; but we may venture the assertion that it would be difficult to find the Christian whose flesh and heart have not at some season or other been ready to faint and fail under his temptations. These are the fiery serpents and scorpions that make the wilderness terrible. The workings of indwelling sin are a cause of grief and sore distress to the Christian. Faintness and exhaustion, a panting of the heart, a failing of the strength, inward wretchedness and groaning in spirit, are produced by them. And it is by a way where such sufferings and distress must be endured that he is led to the city of habitation.

(2) But a second source of pain and distress to the Christian is the afflictions which he shares in common with the world. Carnal reason would argue that being so dear to God, and so truly separated from the world, the seal of divine favour should be impressed upon him in his exemption from the common lot of men, suffering and sorrow. But God's way is not our way, nor are His thoughts our thoughts. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." "Consider in thine heart," says the man of God to the Israelites, "that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." While the cup of worldly prosperity may overflow with the wicked, the Christian may be emptied from vessel to vessel, and tossed from wave to wave, enduring a great fight of afflictions. Though the measure dispensed to

God's people is infinitely varied, yet, as the children of God, all of them are blessed with His paternal chastisement. They cannot go astray without being corrected, they cannot commit sin without feeling it to be the evil and the bitter thing. They cannot form schemes of worldly aggrandizement or worldly pleasure, that hinder their progress in the divine life, without having them blasted. They cannot set up idols which displace the jealous God from the throne of their hearts, without having them crumbled into dust.

(3) But a third source of trouble and distress to the Christian remains to be noticed.* [It arises from the very exercise of his graces. In this tabernacle he groans, being burdened. The love of holiness makes the workings of corruption grievous. The love of Christ, and a sense of immeasurable obligation to Him, make a dead heart and poor scanty services the occasion of bitter sorrow. The more the work of grace advances in his soul, the finer his spiritual sensibility, and the clearer his views of the excellence of a holy God, the more painfully alive is he to the dishonour done to God by his sins and by the sins of his fellow-men. "Rivers of water run down his eyes because men keep not God's law." And just because he has learned the value of the soul, he has "great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart" for the precious souls around him that are despising the Saviour and walking in the broad way that leadeth to destruction.]

* There is a gap in the MS. here, as the leaf which contained the remainder of this paragraph is wanting. The sentences enclosed within brackets, substantially as given in other places by the author, seem not inappropriate here.

4. The way by which Christ leads forth His people to the city of habitation is that of constant and absolute dependence. The Christian is not brought into the right way, and then left without a guide or protector, to advance in his own strength and confiding in his own resources. He is not girded with heavenly armour, and then sent out to the perilous conflict solitary and unattended. He has a Captain and Commander to fight under. Like the Israelites in the wilderness, he must be daily nourished and strengthened from above; and therefore he is taught to say, "I am poor and needy." Such language befits him as surely in his season of confidence and triumph as in that of despondency and dreaded fall; as surely in the last as in the first stage of his journey. His first and his last conquests are won by the help of the same strong hand. His safety and stability depend not on anything he now is, on anything grace has made him, but on his continued union to the Lord Jesus Christ. His growth depends not on anything in the nature of the grace already implanted, separated from continued supplies of grace from his living Head. He may be blessed with the persuasion that his sins are forgiven, and yet in his next approach to the throne of grace he will have anew to plead for pardon. He may be blessed with the persuasion and the experience that he has been washed from his sins in the blood of the Lamb, and yet he must repair for new and continued cleansing from his defilements. The pillar of cloud and of fire was not withdrawn from the Israelites when they entered the wilderness. It preceded them, as the rock followed them, in all their wanderings. The manna did not at once fall in such profusion as to render a further supply un-

necessary; or if more than the day's provision was gathered, it became unsound and unwholesome. An ever-pressing sense of need is the Christian's only security; for thus only can he maintain his communion with heaven. Conscious unworthiness, conscious helplessness, conscious dependence for grace to resist sin, to discharge duty, and to endure trial, are his only safe attendants in the right way. And therefore he learns to come daily as empty, to receive out of Christ's inexhaustible fulness.

II. This way—the way of pilgrimage, of conflict, of trial, of dependence—is the right way. (1) It is not indeed the way of the world, and yet it is the right way. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." The way of the world is that of complete and unresisted carnality. It is that of absorption of body, soul, and spirit in those things which are seen and temporal. It is that of carnal ease and repose. It is that of surrender of the whole man to the dominion of sin and of Satan. It is that of forgetfulness of God and of eternity. It is that of insensibility to the soul's exigencies, to its unspeakable need of deliverance from wrath and from sin. It is a broad and an open way, hedged in neither by a supreme regard to the authority of God, nor by a love to His law. It is the way of the "many." They pursue it thoughtlessly and carelessly, walking after the lusts of their flesh, and acknowledging no other guide than the desires of their mind. It is in many cases indeed a hard and a rugged way; sin often brings its punishment along with it; the vanity of the object of pursuit is bitterly felt, vice and wickedness produce bodily suffering and

anguish, conscience comes with its sting, the terrors of a judgment-seat and an eternity of wrath rise before them. But it is in many cases—and these are the more dangerous and the more desperate—a smooth and an easy way. No threatening Providences interfere to check the impetuous course. Conscience remains torpid and inactive; and in its silence, if ever they look forward to a future state, they contemplate it without apprehension. Easy and secure, they are brought into desolation as in a moment. From their slippery pre-eminence they are cast down into destruction. Then is it proved that theirs is not the right way, and that the Christian's path does not less surely lead to the city of habitation though it is the path of the few and not of the many, though it be the narrow and not the broad way, though it be the way of pilgrimage and not of rest, of pain and trial and not of ease and security.

(2) But again. It is not the way that carnal reason approves of, and yet it is the right way. It would suggest that the Christian, the possessor of such exalted privileges, the heir to such a glorious inheritance, should not be left in so mean and depressed a condition in this world. It perceives not that the glorious kingdom of God is within. It sees not that the wondrous workings of God are exhibited in stamping His own sacred image on a soul that is clothed with a covering of clay. It understands not that a state of pilgrimage, of warfare, and of trial is best fitted for a redeemed sinner and a delivered child of wrath ere his redemption be completed and his rest be obtained, that these may be the more dearly prized and welcomed; and that the infinite love and power of God are more marvellously manifested in His gracious dealings with the Christian in the wilder-

ness, than if he were at once to be translated from Egypt to Canaan. Therefore its reasonings do not make the Christian's way to the city of habitation to be less surely the right way.

(3) Further, it is not always recognised or perceived by the Christian himself to be the right way, and yet it does not the less fully deserve the name. Were not God's purpose one of infinite grace, did it not suppose its object to be unworthy, the frequent murmurings and repinings of His people would provoke Him to desert them. Though provided with heavenly manna, they are often ready to cry out for the flesh-pots of Egypt, and to say that their soul loatheth the provision of God. (It is well that the desires of their carnal impatience are not gratified, and that they are chastened without being consumed). Instead of gladly hastening to the discharge of all duty in the strength of promised grace, they sometimes strive to avoid it. Flesh and blood may represent it as unreasonably arduous, and as demanding too large a measure of self-denial, of patience, and of fortitude. The Christian may be called to meet enemies from an encounter with whom his spirit shrinks, because in his folly and in his guilt he has been making a dangerous compromise with them. He may, like the prophet Jonah, be found deliberately scheming to clear the right way of some of its apparent ruggedness, or daringly and presumptuously asking a reason of God for marking out his way in a direction directly opposed to all that he judges right, when he should be moving submissively, nay gladly, forward in it. The Christian has at best but an imperfect view afforded him, and a limited experience given him, of the admirable contrivance by which, in all the dealings of God, his advance

in the right way is secured. But it does happen, and not seldom, that he regards those very dispensations that work most powerfully for his good as being most against him. God's way is in the sea, and His path in the mighty waters. Visitations in Providence, dark and mysterious, striking at once at the blossom and root of his earthly hopes, come thick upon him, and he cannot always say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." He is but taken out of the furnace to be again sent into it. One fiery trial succeeds another. "All these things are against me," said Jacob. Yet he lived to know that he had spoken unadvisedly with his lips. God's way may be a circuitous way, its blessed termination may be hidden by its windings; but it is still the right way.

(4) Yet again, the Christian is often led forth by this way, when he dares not and will not believe that he is so privileged. He is often brought into it in much fear, and kept in it in much fear, scarcely venturing to whisper to himself the hope that he shall have his life as a prey. Where others see ground of comfort and joy, he, in his unsparing accusation of self and his perverse ingenuity, sometimes finds matter of discouragement and trembling. And yet is he kept in that way in which "the wayfaring men, though fools, do not err," even "the way of holiness." Not seldom trodden in darkness and in fear, this is still the right way. For it is God's way. It is the highway cast up by Himself to lead into His glorious presence. It is as impossible for one who walks in it to miss the mark as it is for God to lie or His purpose to be made void. It is a good and a blessed way, even irrespective of its termination. In its

most rugged steps it is preferable to the broad way of sin and unfettered carnal enjoyment. There is a blessedness in the hanging of the soul upon God, consciously unworthy and consciously helpless, that the full measure of this world's pleasures can never impart. It is the most fitting way to the city of habitation. We may know some of its excellencies now, and what is not known now shall be known hereafter. The character of Him who has marked it out is a guarantee for its perfect adaptation to its end. It is the way in which a conformity of all His followers to their once suffering and now exalted Head is secured. It is the way, too, in which the sovereign omnipotent grace, and rich forbearance, and unchanging love of God are most marvellously displayed. It is the way in which His judgment of this world is vindicated—"If the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" It is the way to make heaven be felt by the Christian as a gift of grace, and to endear and to make it truly sweet to him. It is after being tossed and buffeted on the ocean that the desired haven is truly prized and welcomed. All who are guided in this way shall at length acknowledge from experience that "not one word of all God's good promise has failed." We cannot doubt that one of the employments of the glorified saints in heaven will be to contemplate with adoring wonder the arrangements of wisdom and love by which all things were made to work together for their good, by which their temptations and afflictions, the ordering of their place and lot in the world, the particular providences with which they were visited, the disappointment of their hopes and the frustrating of their plans, were made to subserve their eternal interests.

III. Let us, in the third place, contemplate for a moment the city of habitation to which the right way leads. It is sacred ground; but as the object of the Christian's hope and his promised rest, we should not shrink from approaching it. It is God who has prepared it; He is its Builder and Maker; it is prepared for the entrance of all His people, by the entrance of their Leader and Forerunner. (1) The most obvious idea suggested by the words, "a city of habitation," is that of rest from pilgrimage and consequent suffering. The desert will have been crossed, and faintness and exhaustion cannot follow them into the Promised Land. The enemy's country will have been left behind them. This world's troubles, its thousand distractions and cares, can no longer reach them. Satan may contemplate afar off their felicity, and fret at it; but he cannot mar it. They shall be delivered from the body of sin and death, and presented before God faultless, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; for their robes shall be washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. They shall no longer complain of a hard heart or a blinded mind or grovelling affections, of spiritual barrenness or unworthy services. Fears of hell and of sin shall be for ever dissipated. Their hearts will be relieved of all their burdens, and every tear shall be wiped from their eyes.

(2) But it will be a rest in God, in His full and intimate communion. They shall be made like Him; His reflected image will be perfect and spotless. They shall be holy, as He is holy. They shall be made worthy to enjoy His direct fellowship; meet to glorify, to praise, and to serve Him. Ordinances shall be no more; they

shall see Him as He is. Faith and hope shall be lost in vision and fruition. Here their communion with God is broken; there it shall be unbroken. Here they obtain but an occasional glimpse of the light of His countenance; there it shall ever be lifted up upon them in full and unclouded radiance. But "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what He hath prepared for them."

(3) Finally, This rest and this blessedness shall be enduring and eternal. They shall dwell in God's presence for ever. They shall live and be blessed while God lives. All that constitutes His infinite and unchanging blessedness shall be shared and felt by them as far as their finite natures can admit of it. They shall rejoice with Him, in His being, His greatness, His glory, in the contemplation of His adorable perfections and works. The communications of His love shall flow out to them. Their minds shall be filled with His image, their hearts shall be filled with His love, their tongues shall celebrate His praises to all eternity. Ages shall roll on and find them still engaged in singing the new song, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever." Amen and amen.

Is it, then, to such a rest and such a dwelling-place that the Christian is guided? How calm and submissive should this consideration make him under all his trials and afflictions! What though the road be rugged, if it leads to Immanuel's happy land! What though weeping should endure for the night, if joy cometh in the morning! What though the burden be heavy, if he does not sink under it!

But is there only one way to the city of habitation? Then have we been guided into it? Is there but one gate that opens into it? the strait gate that admits not the worldling, the hypocrite, the formalist, or the whole-hearted, but that flies open to the broken in heart and the contrite in spirit, the self-emptied and self-condemned. Have we entered in by it? Would we be led forth by the right way, with all its humbling experiences? Would we rather be the meanest and the most unworthy of the followers of the Lamb than the most exalted of this world's votaries? Would the hope of deliverance from sin, and of full communion with a holy God, with all the overwhelming glory of its Object, be sweet and transporting beyond description? Or are we still in the broad way, with our backs to heaven and our faces to hell? Then indeed is our case one that claims unfeigned pity and compassion, whatever our external circumstances may be: there is not an expression in the Word of God that can warrant us to believe that we shall be reprieved another day or another hour from the execution of the sentence denounced against us. But the scales are on men's eyes, so that they rush blindfold into the pit that yawns to receive them. They are sensible to guilt and to sin, and therefore Jesus Christ is to them as a root out of a dry ground.

Yet He waits to be gracious. The door of mercy is not shut. You are not yet in the miserable situation of those who cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us," and to whom He replies, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." He is willing and ready to receive you. He is Himself the way to the Father. He has pardon freely to dispense. He has merit to deliver from the lowest hell. He has

treasures of grace, to break asunder like flax the ties that bind you to sin and Satan and this present evil world. If you do not despise and reject Him—if as lost and undone and hell-deserving sinners you put your eternal interests into His hands, and own Him as all your acceptance, your comfort, your hope, and your blessedness, He will guide your feet into the way of peace, and you, too, shall at length reach His city of habitation.

Walking in the Light

BY THE

Rev. FINLAY COOK, Reay.*

"If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."—*1 John i. 7.*

We are met together professing to thank God for His goodness—for our privilege in having got another opportunity of renewing our vows, and of binding ourselves afresh to Him in a well ordered covenant. We must soon separate, each to his own home, and these words in the text are very suitable for the meditation of Christians

* The Rev. Finlay Cook was the third son of Charles Cook, farmer, Kilmory, Arran, where he was born in 1778. In 1817, after undergoing his Arts and Divinity courses, he was licensed by the Presbytery of Lanark, 21st August, 1816. The following year he was ordained to the Achrenie Mission, parish of Halkirk, Caithness, and in 1829 he was called to Cross, Lewis, and in 1833 to the East Church, Inverness. From there he was called to Reay in 1835. In 1843 he joined the Free Church, and became minister of Shebster Free Church. He passed to his rest on 12th June, 1858, aged 80 years, and was buried in the aisle of the old churchyard of Reay. As a preacher Mr Cook was greatly beloved by the Lord's people. His preaching, no doubt, lacked the sharp note that characterised that of his famous brother, Archibald (or "Archie Cook," as he was affectionately called), and thus did not appeal so much to the conscience; not but sinners were made to feel under it a sense of their accountability to the God against whom they had sinned. His brother-in-law, Rev. Donald Sage, Resolis, has

going out again to the world—"If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." We are walking on the way to eternity. You and I will soon be there. Where shall we meet in eternity? What shall be our dwelling place? Who shall be our companions? What shall be our portion? Now, some are going to heaven and some to hell; and how shall we know which way we are going? The text and the verse preceding give the character of both parties. In the 6th verse it is said: "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." We lie to God, and we know that all liars shall have their portion in the lake of fire. But says one, "I am a Christian." Then do the truth; do not walk in darkness—in the darkness of wickedness—darkness of worldliness—darkness of error. Sin, alas! hath brought us all into darkness. In the 7th verse it

given a vivid pen-picture of Mr Cook, part of which we quote: "As a preacher of the gospel, Mr Finlay Cook might truly be regarded as an able minister of the New Testament. To native talent, or high grasp of intellect, or literary attainments, or powers of oratory, he had not even the slightest pretensions. He was obviously the simple, unadorned earthen vessel in which, for the fuller manifestation of the excellency of the divine power, the treasure was deposited. When he preached, the first thing exhibited to men was the earthen vessel in all its ungainly rudeness of form. In delivering the first few introductory sentences of his discourse, his auditors felt for him. It appeared to be little else than a bald, uninteresting statement of gospel truisms, every one of which not only exhausted itself, but presented an unsurmountable obstacle to all further prosecution of the subject. He went on, however, in that strength which was very soon to show that it was made perfect in weakness, and, whilst thus groping his way, he seemed to be utterly indifferent to the disgust or approbation of his audience.

is said, "But if we walk in the light." This, then, is the way in which those who are going to heaven walk; they walk in the light as Christ is in the light; they have fellowship the one with another; and, being poor sinners, they have the blood of Jesus cleansing them from all sin. Take your choice now. Here are both ways set before you—light and darkness. Which do you desire to walk in? "Well, I'll think of it, and begin to-morrow." Long since that *to-morrow* was looked for. It will ruin many of us. When to-morrow comes, I fear it will not be known that ever we read the Bible, heard of God, or had an offer of the Saviour. Now let us look for a little,—

I. At the character of believers. They walk in the light as Christ is in the light. They are, indeed, often in darkness in their own experience, but never in the darkness of the world.

At last, however, he fully entered into and warmed on his subject, and then, indeed, the tongue of the stammerer was unloosed—his lips were opened, his words were uttered freely, fluently, and without hesitation or repetition. He was borne onward, not by anything in himself, but exclusively by his subject. His hearers at once participated in the heavenly influence. Their minds were both roused and arrested; every eye was directed to him, whilst the deep anxiety depicted on their countenances betokened the entrance of his words, as words of fire, into their very inmost souls. Their former but ill-concealed apathy disappeared, and was followed by an almost breathless attention" (*Memorabilia Domestica*, p. 396). The above sermon was preached in the First Free Church, Thurso, on the Monday of the Communion in June, 1855, and taken down at the time by the Rev. Walter R. Taylor, D.D., afterwards minister of Kelvinside Free Church, Glasgow. The sermon as it appears above is taken from Rev. Alexander Auld's *Ministers and Men in the Far North* (1st edition).

II. Consider their fellowship. They have fellowship one with another. The sheep do not care to keep company with the goats.

III. Consider their encouragement. Whatever of sin is in them, yet the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth them from all sin.

I. They walk in the light. Christ Himself is in the light. He is the true light that shineth in darkness. He is the life, and the life is the light of men (John i. 4, 5). The apostles saw Him personally. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." But they had eyes to look further. "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." They saw Him thus by faith. By faith, as well as by sight, they saw Him, heard Him, looked upon Him, handled Him. Oh! the blessed eye of faith, that sees the beauty of Jesus; the blessed ear of faith, opened to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd; the blessed touch of faith—"Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands." It is easy to speak about faith—to prate about it like parrots—not so easy coming to the blessed experience of it. We shall not see Jesus by sight until death; but we must now by faith get some glimpses of the King in His beauty, and of the land that is very far off. We must now behold as in a glass darkly the glory of the Lord, if we would be changed into His image. Oh! you who are looking and living into worldly conformity, you shall yet take fully on the image of the devil. But you walk in the light, believer. Who gave you this light? God Himself. What gives you the light of the sun? The sun himself. Until God says, "Let there be light," the light that is in us is but darkness. And when He

comes as the light, He gives to believe that He is, and that He demands our worship in spirit and truth. Then we begin to go to prayer, to preaching, to those who know the Lord; but even in these means we cannot rest. Many, indeed, whom the Lord never set a-seeking in quest of Himself, thus get some notions of religion. Yes, I have people in my parish who can talk about God and about faith, and who could preach, too, very well about these things, but who are really ignorant of them. And you, too, believer, were ignorant of them till God came. You remember your ignorance of a soul, of sin, of God, and how Satan took advantage of your ignorance, and made you live like the rest of the world, till God came and revealed Himself to you, and set you seeking Himself. Now, you believed there was a God—a God in creation and in providence, and a God in redemption. You believed that this God revealed Himself as one God in Three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—each Person having His own office in the salvation of our lost race, and each Person equal in power and glory. You believed that you could get no rest, no satisfaction, till you knew Him as revealed; and hearing Him making offer of Himself to you, you rested your soul upon Him alone for salvation, as He is freely offered in the gospel. Knowing the Lord, you know the way wherein to walk. "When it pleased God to reveal His Son to me," says Paul, "immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." There is now a walking in the light—a renouncing of the works of darkness. "I am the way," says Jesus; "no man cometh to the Father but by me." Coming into this way by the gate of regeneration, we now walk in the light of the living, and renounce everything that would keep us walking accord-

ing to the course of this world. Happy ye who have thus been taken, one of a city and two of a family, and brought to Zion! Will you not this day bless Jehovah for having not left you in the darkness of the world—for having brought you into the footsteps of the flock? Perhaps you remember some one of the Lord's people through whom you were brought to leave the broad way. You will have fellowship with that soul yet in heaven, though now you can perhaps but weep at his grave, remembering his conversation and prayers, and fearing you will never be like him. Yet the light gains ground. Drops from heaven fall on the soil like rain upon the mown grass, and keep you following on till you shall appear before God in Zion.

(1). More particularly as to this walking, I observe that in order to it we *need light upon the way and strength to walk in it*. There is, therefore, wrought in the soul dependence upon the good Spirit that leads to the land of uprightness. In His light faith turns earth's midnight into heaven's noonday. "I press towards the mark," says Paul. The mark is before me; I see it; so I must press forward to reach the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. It is true that I have met with many mercies and deliverances, but these are behind me, and much of the wilderness, and Jordan also is before me; so I must press forward in face of all opposition, giving up everything that would keep me back. The believer has, indeed, many sins that beset him, but these must be set aside by faith and repentance. Without this there can be no true walking. Tell all your lets and hindrances to Him in whose way you are walking. He is the blessed

Shepherd, who will suit Himself to your case—sometimes leading, sometimes drawing, sometimes carrying you. "He feedeth His flock like a shepherd."

(2). Again, this walking is a walk in the fear of God, and with a tender conscience. "I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me." "Walk before me," says God, "and be thou perfect." We must walk, believing that His eye is upon us. God sees me at all times—in company and alone—and He sees my heart. Is my heart right with Him? Am I in His fear all the day long? Parents, how do you conduct yourselves before your families? God's eye is upon you. Masters, how do you deal towards your servants? From God's presence whither can you flee? Ministers, you and your people, remember it is before Jehovah you are.

(3). This walk is also a *walk in humility*. What makes you humble? The light of God that has entered your soul. What is the cause of all our strifes and divisions? What but pride! Oh! this must be destroyed; God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble, to keep them in the way. So when pride gets up in those who are walking in the way, they may look for the whip—"a rod for the fool's back." You were at the [Lord's] Table yesterday—what were you doing there? Setting Christ before you? And did you get a glimpse of Him in His humility, poverty, lowliness, love; yet with ever an eye to His Father's glory? And will not that crucify your pride?

(4). Lastly, as to this walking, I remark, it is a *walking in love*, as Christ walked. "Be ye followers of God, as dear children." Walk in love, as Christ loved

His Church and gave Himself for it. Follow Him; imitate Him. A child will imitate his father; a scholar his master—not that he will come up to the master, but he will write the copy after him. His fellowship will now be your chief desire. "Saw ye Him that my soul loveth?" Did you ever meet a poor wife in the street who had lost her husband? At every one that passed by she would ask, "Did you see my husband?". So with you, believer. No one will fill His place with you but Himself. No one else would satisfy Mary. "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." "I know my sheep," says Jesus, "and am known of mine." This fellowship engenders holiness of heart and life. Christ is holy, and they drink into His Spirit. Drops of holiness drip into their souls through this fellowship. Secret sins thus get less, and victory over lusts of the flesh and of the mind is thus obtained. Oh! then, walk in the light as He is in the light. Satan, indeed, will be setting baits for you, both in the world and in the closet; but He has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness." Oh! sinner, will you not be persuaded to walk in this way—you who are walking in the world as if you are never to leave it? But the time is not far off when the world will be glad to get rid of you, and heaven's doors will be shut upon you. Oh! think of this. And you, who profess the Lord's name, see that you indeed walk in Him. If I walk not in the light, as Christ is in the light, though I be an apostle, yet I will be with Judas at last.

II. Consider what is the special mark given in the text of those who walk in the light. They have fellow-

ship one with another. They have the same God, the same Saviour, the same indwelling Spirit, ay, and the same devil. They have been enabled to break fellowship with the world, and to say, as Ruth to Naomi, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Do you say so? Well, our fellowship is truly with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ. Will you come into this fellowship? "Our Father which art in heaven." You must begin here. You may join yourself to the people of God, but you will be as the foolish virgins till you know something of this. A child, if among strangers, will cling to his father, so you must have fellowship with the Father before the world can be empty to you, or heaven be longed for. Now, there can be no fellowship, no communion, without first union. What unites to Christ and to God in Him?—Faith. What unites to His people?—Love. First be united to Christ, and love, which comes out of the womb of faith, will then unite you to the brethren. By union to Christ, you and they will now be branches growing on the true vine. The Lord is indeed cutting down the fruitful branches, and, oh! to see young ones rising in their room. What a blessed sight to see young people reading the Bible, praying, conversing about eternal things! I have seen this, but I fear it is now out of fashion. When I see young people meet together, I see them—yes, even on the Lord's Day—walk and talk as lightly as if they were at a fair. Oh! young people, remember you have been baptized in the name of the Three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—and you shall know that yet either in mercy or in judgment. But as to this Christian fellowship; being, as we have said, united to Christ, the blessed Spirit of God that dwells in your

brother now takes possession of you, and you are now joined in heart, like Ruth and Naomi, or like Jonathan and David; and when you meet, you will be better of one another. I like to meet my fellow-Christian, to have have him tell me of the Lord's dealings with him—of his trials and of his deliverances. Indeed, if we both knew the Lord as we ought, we would not want a subject. I like to have my fellow-Christian praying for me, giving me a promise, telling me of my evil heart, for I have one. I like to see him also mourning over sinners that are going to hell, and to see him wrestling with the Lord, that He would revive His work in the Church and raise a seed to do Him service. These are the things we will have in common. There are some, indeed, who are like a bird I have heard of—that whatever bird it met, it took feathers to suit theirs. Take care of that—suiting yourself to the worldling, to the Pharisee, to the hypocrite. You know your own heart. Be watchful. Have a sense of your own weakness: be always afraid of yourself, remembering you have a deceitful heart, a corrupt mind, a tempting devil. Now, in our fellowship there are two duties not to be forgotten—*one*, that we must bear with the infirmities of one another: and so we may, when we know something of our own hearts. We need not expect to find a perfect Christian on this side of heaven, and the more forbearance the more sympathy. *Another*, we must be helpful to one another. Has your brother burdens?—help him. Is he in worldly trouble?—do what you can for him. Is he in spiritual trouble?—try and be useful to him. Alas! when through pride and self-seeking our fellowships are broken—when mutual prayer is neglected—when one will not encourage or reprove another, but when every one goes his own way.

Woe to the Church that day! Oh! people of God, keep up fellowship. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I." And see that you bear a rising generation on your spirits. You parents, you like to see your children getting on in the world, but would you not rather see them begging from door to door, if Christ were formed in their souls the hope of glory, than see them crowned heads, if without the Saviour. Let us walk, then, as for eternity, in fellowship with Christ, and with one another in Him. But I am a sinner, and how can I do this? I, who am shapen in sin, how can I walk thus? Well, this leads me to speak of,—

III. The encouragement here presented. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." Oh! believer, this is your mercy!—your cause of rejoicing! Do not say, "When I am in better frame I will follow Christ and walk with Him." There is no remedy for, no destruction to, the works of darkness but the blood of Jesus. He took flesh and blood. Oh! how is it that we do not love Him? How is it that we can let Him a moment out of our thoughts, when He took our nature? The blood is the life. "The life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev. xvii. 11). Jesus shed His blood. He could not as God die, but He took our nature, and shed His blood—hence it is called the blood of God. This makes it meritorious; puts value on it. Is not this wonderful? Jehovah, who created all things, and upholds all things, taking flesh and shedding His blood. Here go, oh! sinner, if out of hell—if soul and body are yet together—go to the blood of Jesus Christ. There is enough in Him to cleanse from all sin. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be

as white as snow." And what follows? "If ye be willing, and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" —that is, a blessing with everything you enjoy, through the virtue of the blood of atonement. Atonement has been made by this blood. God's broken law required a sacrifice, and Jesus gave the sacrifice. The blood was sprinkled on the book and all the people, to show that it satisfied God and purged the sinner. Therefore, as surely as it has been offered up to God, it must be applied to your conscience. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Nothing else will do. This is the only shelter from the wrath to come. It is also peace-speaking blood. It speaks peace in heaven. The speaking of this blood brings the Spirit to your soul. Abel's blood brought death to Cain. Christ's blood brings mercy, pardon, love, to your soul—brings faith, repentance, and every grace—all comes through this blessed channel. The blood of bulls and of goats . . . . could not bring one sinner to heaven, nor bring the pardon of one sin; but the blood of Christ brings the remission of all sins. It is said here, "cleanseth us from *all* sins"—from little sins, from great sins—from sins of omission, from sins of commission. Do not hide your sins from this blood. Before the Lord began to deal with you, you had buried your sins out of your sight; but now there will be a resurrection of them, and this loads you with the burden of guilt. And, oh! what a burden that is to an awakened conscience. But the precious blood of Christ can remove it. Turn not away, then, from this blood. Every time you neglect it, you leave a sting in your conscience, which shall be to you yet the worm that dieth not. You have secret faults. David said, "Who can understand his errors?" Oh! bring them to the

blood. Let them give you errands to Christ. This will keep you little in your own eyes, and make Him precious to you. Are you more afraid of sin than of hell? Are you saying, "Will I ever be free of sin?" Well, you will get it removed in this blood, even now, and at length you will be as free of it as if you had never known it. But I cannot continue. I must leave it with you. You are now each of you going down to the world. Will your families and neighbours take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus. Go not out in your own strength. "If thy presence go not with us," said Moses. "My angel shall go with you." Oh! no, even an angel will not put up with us. Come with us thyself. Well, my presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest. Depend on the Lord alone, and beware of grieving His Spirit from your soul. I read of a lady of whom it was said she was an angel in church but a devil at home. Be not so; but set the Lord before you at all times. You know not what troubles, what trials, what crosses are before you; but you know that such *are* before you; for His people are a people who come out of great tribulation. Oh! but what of the tribulation? It leads them to wash their robes and to make them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they shall be before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. Shall we be among that company? Well, they were sinners once, but sinners led to the blood. Therefore, say you, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." The hyssop of the promise dipt in the blood of Jesus, and sprinkled on your soul, can alone fit you for glory. "Now are ye clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you."

Disclosures to God's People at the Great Day.

BY THE

REV. ARCHIBALD COOK, DAVIOT.*

"Not to me only but unto all them also that love his appearing."—*2 Tim. iv. 8.*

THERE are not very many who believe the preciousness of the day of grace. There are millions to-day in hell that shall be through eternity saying, "O, if I had another day!" They would go on their knees to the utmost ends of the earth for one offer of mercy, and

* Archibald Cook was born at Achareach, Glenscorradale, Kilmory, Arran, in 1788. In 1823 he was ordained missionary to the Berriedale-Bruan Mission, Caithness. He was called to the newly formed North Church, Inverness, in 1837, and to Daviot Free Church in 1844. Mr Cook died in 1865. His preaching was greatly relished by the Lord's people. Perhaps none of the preachers of the Northern Highlands ever got so near to the consciences of his hearers as did Mr Cook. Mr Sage, in his *Memorabilia Domestica*, who was no blind admirer, has paid this generous tribute to him as a minister: "I question if there be any of the age in which we live who, in pure disinterested zeal, in holy abstractedness from the world, in vital godliness, or in exclusive devotedness to the eternal interests of the kingdom of heaven, more nearly approximates to the divinely-trained disciples of Galilee than does Archibald Cook" (p. 401). A number of his sermons were published in 1907 under the title, *Sermons: Gaelic and English*, with biographical sketch by the Rev. J. R. Mackay, M.A.

there are many this day on the earth that will yet have this cry, "O, if I had one day more of the means of grace!" The Apostle, after having gone through many severe conflicts, is now speaking with victory: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." From the day the Lord met with him on the way to Damascus until now he had to set his face to affliction after affliction, to temptation after temptation, to trial after trial; but O, it was he that got the song at last: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day"; and he adds this, and has left it on record for strengthening the Church of God to the end of time, "Not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

When we were speaking formerly on these words we said we would give some marks of those who "love his appearing," or the second coming of the Lord. And also that we would mention some of the things that shall be manifested at Christ's second coming which shall make "his appearing" pleasant and precious to His Church. In speaking of the marks of those who "love his appearing," we said that before one could do so he must have given his consent to the way of salvation revealed in the gospel, must have been persuaded that salvation is only in Christ, and must have been brought to apply to Him like the leper, who said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." It was no great faith that was there, but there was a hope, a "who can

tell?" Now the soul that comes to that, we must not, according to the Word of God, say that such a soul shall be lost, but we have no warrant to say but that if one comes no further he may yet be in hell. Again, they that love His appearing, we said, were concerned to get evidence of their interest in Christ, and were using the means of grace so as to obtain such evidence. But none shall come to be assured of their interest in Christ until other things are made empty to them, for as long as a creature has anything in which his heart rests he will not concern himself much to find his rest in God. We shall now take up the second matter proposed: What are some of those things that shall make Christ's second coming pleasant and precious to His Church?

I. There will be given "at that day" a wonderful revelation of the glory of creation. All that God did from the beginning of time and from the days of eternity, He had it in His view to glorify Himself in the sight of holy intelligent creatures. There is not any holy creature but has delight in viewing the works of God, but we are so blinded by sin that we can see very little of God in any of His works. And thus the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures compares man to the beasts that perish (Ps. xlix.). There is a mystery of glory in all that God has created, especially how He has left His own stamp on everything that He created. If we could see the stamp of God on the blades of grass and on the herbs of the field, we would feel it difficult to trample on them. But, by reason of our spiritual blindness, we are stout and strong, and can perceive little of God's glory in creation, yea, can even abuse His creatures—the common mercies with which we are surrounded. We read that when God had finished the work of creation the morning

stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. Why? Because of the revelation God had given of His own glory thereby. But sin has disordered all the works of God in the world, so then the creation in itself is as if corrupted, and so we are told that heaven and earth shall flee away from before the presence of the Lord, that the earth and all that is therein shall be burnt up when He appeareth, and this is because sin lies on them. Indeed, when we see the enmity and ferocity of the irrational creatures one to another, we cannot think it was so from the beginning, but that the sin of man took effect on them, so that the very brute beasts witness for God against the sin of man. The misery that sin has brought on the beasts that perish has a cry against man—the sweat and sighs and groans of these creatures have a voice that God understands, and which shall yet bring sparks of wrath on unregenerate man.

Also, there shall be a revelation given "at that day" of the glory of the state in which man, the highest creature, was made. Man was made such an excellent and wonderful creature as that we are not able to comprehend the least of that excellency. He was made in the image of God. There is not a person on the earth but, if he could comprehend the glory of his original state, would be ashamed to exist. God formed the body of man out of the dust of the ground, and into that body He breathed the breath of God, and man became a living soul; and He formed such an intimate and mysterious connection between body and soul that, let the soul be absent for one moment, and the body becomes as dead and lifeless as the dust from whence it was made. This soul of man God formed in His own image, and the glory of that image shone out

through the body in a wonderful way. The soul saw with the eyes of the body, heard with the ears of the body, and the stamp of God upon the soul so manifested itself through the body as that all creation apprehended it and became subject to man. God took delight in man, as His own workmanship, and as bearing His own image, and as the channel of communication between God and all creation; and, as one of the saints said, "God viewed man also as that created form which Eternal Wisdom prepared to take unto Himself." And this delight man returned; he loved the God who gave him his being, and communed with Him as the fountain of blessedness. Now, something of the glory of that state, and of the glory due to God from man in that state, shall be disclosed "at that day." Alas, how sin has defaced this glory and brought dishonour on the creation of God, so that even the irrational creatures perceive it, and fail in reverencing man as at the beginning. Yea, the elements of nature frown upon man because of sin, for were it not that Christ stood in as the surety of His people, the sun itself would withhold its light. Thus we read that when Christ was enduring the desert of His people's sin, the sun was darkened—"there was darkness over all the earth" (Luke xxiii. 44). O man, that thy horse and cow are made subject to thee, it is from the death of Christ that proceeds.

II. What is implied in man being brought into covenant with God shall be disclosed "at that day." How wonderful that the Eternal Jehovah should come so near the creature of His hands as to make Himself over to him to be his portion and the fountain of his happiness, and that upon a covenant foundation. What

foundation was this? Just obedience to God. God covenanted with man that, if he continued in his present state of love and obedience, he should enjoy the everlasting favour and fellowship of God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." Now this belonged to man, should there be no covenant. It belonged to man to give obedience to Him who gave him being, and it belonged to him to love and reverence God because of the excellency that is in Him—an excellency capable of bestowing everlasting blessedness on all His creatures. But there was more than this, also, in the covenant into which God entered with man. There was not only the promise of everlasting life on his continued obedience, but there was added a threatening of death should he rebel and disobey. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Now, it is here that the nature of sin is truly understood—how man not only disregarded the favour and fellowship of God, but how he despised also the threatening of God, and endangered his eternal happiness for a vile thing; how he brought himself into misery by shutting himself out through his sin from the fellowship and communion of God; and, further, how through his sin he lost the capacity for that enjoyment of God's favour and fellowship which he formerly had. For God is holy, but man is now a sinner; God is love, but man is now enmity; God is light, but man is now in darkness. What was seen in man being driven out from God's presence in the Garden of Eden, and a flaming sword turning every way to keep the tree of life, but man's being banished from the favour and fellowship of God, and never more capable of obtaining it on the ground of anything in

himself, yea, justly liable to eternal death. O, what a view the saints will get "at that day" of the state into which sin brought all creatures, the distance from God to which it banished them, and that not only on account of its guilt but also on account of its pollution. They will see, as they never could see in this world, how they were defiled and loathsome, cast out like an infant in its blood in the open field, with no eye to pity it and no hand to help it. No, not in all the creation of God is there anything that can help a lost sinner, but everything in the universe has this voice to a sinner—"No help for thee in me." And, when this shall be opened up "at that day," will there not be a song from the redeemed that shall exalt free grace throughout eternity? And you that desire to be happy for ever, see that you be brought to understand something of this in time.

III. The nature of the mystery of God's electing love shall be disclosed "at that day." The Scriptures reveal to us that there is such a thing as the decrees of God, such a thing as election, but it is very little we can conceive of such a thing in this world. We read of elect angels also. What can we understand of that? But the sovereignty and the omniscience of God shall "at that day" be revealed in a wonderful way. It shall then be seen that the election of all those that are saved was from eternity, that there was nothing in the world but was the opening of the womb of God's eternal purpose—"the womb of the morning." God foresaw from eternity man lying in sin. Every sin of every creature was exposed to His omniscience. Nothing is new with God. You there, sinner—a hard rock—you were thus in His view from eternity, and the sovereignty of God's

dealing with sinners shall come to light "at that day"; how He took one from this quarter and another from that, how He took some in one generation and some in another, in whom and by whose salvation all the attributes of His Divine majesty should be glorified. For, had God left all to perish because of sin, the excellency of the state in which man was created would never be perceived; and, on the other hand, if all men were saved, that woe and endless misery which is the fruit and desert of sin would not be known; but, oh, the sight that shall be given "at that day" of the sovereign, free, and undeserved love and mercy of God, as a fountain the depths of which shall not be fathomed throughout eternity. "O," they shall say, "what moved God to this?" "What moved Him to compassionate me?" Was there anything in me to draw forth His love more than in those who are justly in the place of woe?" May not a soul see, as it were, his own ghost in the spirits now in hell, and say—"O, I was once living in the sins that took these there; what saved me? Just the free love and mercy that is in God." And they shall see what end God had in view towards them in their salvation, that He would save them from sin and make them holy as He is holy. He must have them not only freed from misery, but conformed to His own holy image which they lost by sin, and made meet for communion with Himself through eternity. Jehovah, who is the fountain of all blessedness and happiness, is infinitely holy, and all creatures that shall be perfectly and eternally happy must be perfectly and completely holy, for it is their being unholy that is the cause of all the misery and wretchedness of sinners. Hast thou the toothache, sinner? Thou hast cause to fear that it is but the

earnest of an everlasting sting—the earnest of "the worm that dieth not, and the fire that shall never be quenched." But God having purposed to save His people from sin and misery, and to make them perfectly and for ever holy and happy, His infinite wisdom devised a way whereby this should be brought about, and this leads us to mention another mystery that shall be disclosed "at that day," and which is—

IV. The mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." In this world God's children assent to that mystery by faith, and they also get the benefits flowing from it, but, oh, the sight they shall get of it "at that day," when they shall see all the love, and grace, and wisdom, and power, and holiness, and justice, and truth that is in God, getting a resting-place in Christ as the Mediator, and flowing out to them through that wonderful channel. We learn from Scripture that there are three Persons in the Godhead who are one in nature and equal in power and glory. Now, it shall be disclosed "at that day" that the Second Person of this glorious Trinity undertook the salvation of immortal souls, and for this cause He who was immortality became mortal, He who was eternity became "a child born," He who was "God over all, blessed for ever," became "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"; yea, the God against whom man had sinned, and whose holy displeasure man had awakened, freely and willingly condescended, not only to deliver man from his lost condition, but condescended to deliver him in the only way in which he could be delivered, which was by His own humiliation. "God sent forth His Son, made of a

woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." The Son of God became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and took upon Himself also all the infirmities of our nature without sin. He was hungry, thirsty, wearied, and grieved. The Holy One was for the space of thirty years in the world, hidden, as it were, from man's view. It has pleased the Holy Spirit to draw a veil over those years, but they shall be opened up and manifested "at that day"—what He learned of obedience in those years, what He suffered dwelling among sinners in those years, how He grew up despised and dis-esteemed, for we are told that His own brethren did not believe in Him. Moreover, it shall be disclosed "at that day" how, when He came forth on His public ministry, what "contradiction of sinners" He endured, how He was oppressed and afflicted until at length He was rejected and set at nought, and condemned to be crucified. And it shall be seen how the hand of God was in all this, how He was "wounded for His people's transgressions and bruised for their inquities, how the chastisement of their peace was upon Him, and by His stripes they were healed." He went forward to suffering, to shame, to agony, to death, and the grave, because without shedding of blood there could be no remission, because the pardoning love of God could not reach His children except the sentence passed upon them as transgressors be righteously removed. And so He delivered Himself for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Yes, the death of Christ, and the merit that was in His death, puts the saints in possession of everything that they shall be enjoying throughout the ages of eternity, and so their song shall be—"Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood."

You that have got a taste of this love, it is no wonder you should desire "His appearing."

Also, in taking the human nature to Himself, and in taking His people's sins upon Himself, the Saviour constituted between Himself and them an intimate and mysterious union, which He speaks of as between the vine and the branches, between the head and the other members of the body. Federally it is a union of person that is in it, and also a union of nature—a union that takes place when they are brought to believe in Him for the forgiveness of sins—a union by which His righteousness is made theirs as their sins were made His. Christ is now in glory and His poor people are on the earth, yet there is a close, a spiritual, a living union between Him and them, His Spirit, as the fruit of His death and intercession, coming to them and forming this union and sustaining it in them by faith till He brings them to be with Him where He is. O you, professor, that know nothing of union to Christ and fellowship with Him, you are no better than a wooden leg destitute of the life of the body! But you that have, through union to Christ, a drop of the love of God going through your soul, you shall yet drink of the ocean of divine love to your everlasting satisfaction!

V. Another matter that shall be disclosed to God's people "at that day" is the providences that they were meeting with in the world, and the mysteries connected with these. Many a providence that was not only dark but mysterious they met with, but all shall be made plain "at that day," so that they shall have to say, "He made all things very good." Indeed, they shall see that were things otherwise, they would still be very good, but

as they were, they were working together for their everlasting good. God has in His providence appointed the way and method by which He is pleased to deal with any soul. And when He is coming to arrest a sinner in his career, He causes that sinner to know that he is away from God, and that there are means revealed through which he may return to Him, and that these means he must use if he wishes to find God. Also, the sinner sees that if he continues as he is, and neglects or abuses the means of seeking after God, it shall end in his eternal separation from Him. And so he begins to use the means—to read the Bible, to pray, and to attend public worship. Thus the Lord honours His own appointed means. But the sinner does not usually find in the means what he expected, for God has it in His purpose to teach him that not of himself can he find, even in the means, that which his soul needs, so he is left to weary himself with his own endeavours till he come as a poor helpless creature to the feet of divine grace, confessing his condition, and asking for free sovercign mercy. It is the work of the Holy Spirit now to make known to the poor suppliant the way of salvation by Jesus Christ and through His mediation. Free grace in the Third Person of the Godhead moves him to this, so He is called the Spirit of grace. The Spirit reveals Christ as the only Saviour of sinners, and fixes the eye of the soul on Him for salvation. The light of nature cannot do this. The light of nature and of reason cannot bring a sinner so to see Christ in the glory of His person and of His grace as that he will venture all upon Him for time and eternity. This is the work of the Spirit of God. Now, in making known Christ and His salvation, although in one sense His children all get the same teaching, yet in another

sense they are not all led by the same steps. Some get in youth tokens of the Spirit manifesting the Saviour within, and giving them a taste of His love, so that they can say, in looking back, what the Apostle said, "I know in whom I have believed." Others do not get so clear a persuasion of Christ as the Saviour, and so are harassed with doubts and fears, being all their life subject to bondage. The Lord is sovereign in this. We read of "weak hands and feeble knees," and although it is not to their comfort to be in this state, yet if their expectation is only upon God for their deliverance, they are as safe as those who are getting freer access to the fountain of love. Again, there are some of God's children, and no sooner do they get a little consolation in the Word of God or in secret prayer, but there is something connected with their earthly state that robs them of it. Perhaps a cross in their lot, perhaps a temptation from the world, perhaps a lust in their nature. Thus it is that infinite wisdom keeps them low, keeps them down so that they are ready to lose hope, and say with Rebecca, "If it be so, why am I thus?" And they will be looking on this as tokens of God's anger against them for, perhaps, their old sins. But whatever be the cause, if it keeps them of broken spirit and tender and watchful, the Lord will yet get glory from them in bringing them through, should they go broken and bruised creatures from day to day. Also, some of God's children are kept poor in the world, living from hand to mouth, and others may have much worldly comfort. Some may be kept so empty so that there was nothing that they looked for satisfaction from, but a worm was at the root. And those that have abundance of this world will find that to be so, as sure as the poorest creature, for if they are the

Lord's children, He must make the world become a wilderness to them. Yes, my friends, the carnal world was appointed by the Lord from eternity to be a trial to a gracious soul, yea, the devils themselves were appointed for the trial of every creature in whom the life of God is. But let a spark of the love of Christ be seen in thus weaning His children from the love of the world, and fitting them for the enjoyment of Himself, and their murmuring against His providences will be put to silence, and O, will it not be precious at the end of the journey to be able to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day"?

VI. Another thing that shall be disclosed "at that day" is how the people of God were *exercised under* these providences, how the Lord was dispensing to them grace according to their need. The Saviour, when He was in the world, Himself went through these dark steps. He obtained a fellow-feeling with His children in all their afflictions, and out of the fountain of that fellow-feeling He lets out drops of compassion towards them, and these drops of compassion, coming to them as the fruit of His own sufferings, are very precious. The gracious soul must be broken from the love of sin, and bruised because of sin, and the Lord sends crosses and chastisements on him for this end. The Lord may let loose one sin on a creature to break the power of another sin, one temptation to weaken the strength of another temptation. And O, when it shall be disclosed "at that day," how He thus kept them from destroying themselves, how He thus kept them poor and needy at His

own feet, how He thus kept them from utterly grieving away His Holy Spirit by their transgressions, yea, how He kept them from bringing themselves to eternal perdition, O, how they will be lost in praising Him! And also how they were exercised under their afflictions shall be brought to light, and although the stroke was often sharp and severe, yet that they endured it with submission, justifying the Lord and taking shame to themselves, yea, they were brought to say, "He did all things well." Was it well when He took the world from thee? Yes, it was well. Was it well when He took thy child from thee? Yes, it was well. Was it well when He laid His hand upon thy body and took thy health from thee? Yes, it was well. But what when He withdrew His presence from thy soul, and left thee weeping over a hard heart, a corrupt nature, and a proud spirit, was it well then? Yes, it was well, for He was in all these things fulfilling His own word. "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will purge them as silver is purged, and try them as gold is tried; they shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God." Therefore all that meets them is working for their good, emptying them of themselves and of all created things, and bringing them nearer to Christ to live only on Him and on His fulness. Yes, my friends, there shall be disclosed "at that day" not only all the troubles and trials that met them in this world, but also the way in which they endured these—the faith, the hope, the patience, the submission which they were enabled to exercise under their trials. And when these graces of the Spirit, dwelling in them but often hidden in this world under the clouds of sin and sorrow, shall be made

manifest, all heaven and earth shall put their Amen to the sentence of the righteous Judge, that they get possession of the crown. And, on the other hand, when the enmity to God and to His people that is in the heart of the ungodly shall be opened up "at that day," and when their hidden things of darkness are brought to light, all heaven and earth shall say Amen to the sentence of the righteous Judge, when He shall say, "Depart from me." O, you that are haters of God's poor people, such is their union to Christ that when you draw a sigh from one of them you are in danger of drawing a sigh from the heart of God, and of adding a drop of wrath to your own cup. Man or devil is not capable of touching a gracious soul to their hurt without touching God Himself. Better to have all the powers of Britain pursuing thee than to have a poor child of God complaining against thee at a throne of grace to his Father in heaven.

Lastly, to conclude, let us all remember that this is not our dwelling-place. You, poor believer, the nearer you are to the end of your journey, the nearer you are to your everlasting happiness. Follow on, get the love of sin mortified, cry to the Lord for repentance, for self-denial, for a broken spirit, and eternity will be long enough for God to wipe away all tears from your eyes. Be not content without finding Christ Himself in the Word, in the means of grace, and in His providences toward you, for a moment of His fellowship is the earnest of your enjoying His love throughout the endless ages of eternity. And oh, sinner, you that are taken up wholly with the things of time, when the grim messenger Death lays his hand on you, your doleful cry shall be, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" You are now

wholly taken up about the things of the body, but what comfort shall these afford you in the world of spirits to which you are hastening? You are now wholly taken up with the things of the world, but how will you feel when you see it in flaming fire about you? These are awful words, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst good things, and Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted and thou art tormented." Yes, perhaps just when you have settled down to reap the fruit of your toil in the world, when your nest is warm, then you are summoned to an undone eternity. O eternity, eternity, when millions of years shall have passed, it will be still the same. Now, although you as a sinner are not capable of changing your own nature, yet under the gospel you have as much light as to see that there is sin cleaving to you, which, as a reasonable creature, you ought to abandon, and it is as a reasonable creature God deals with you. Therefore, cry to Him for grace, to enable you to begin to war with sin and to flee to Christ for salvation. And you, hypocrite, that are living in known sin, and yet keeping family worship, you are only mocking your own soul. Yes, you that are harbouring known sin and yet following the means of grace, you will not, while in that state, experience the divine power in in the means, should you follow them to the day of your death. O, do not trifle with sin. Be sure your sin will find you out, and, if you do not forsake it, it will find you out in the depths of hell and be a sting in your soul, calling down upon you the everlasting wrath of God! O be wise, and do not sell a happy eternity for a vile thing. Be wise, and turn from sin unto God, for the wise shall shine as the sun, and as the brightness of the firmament in their Father's kingdom for ever and ever. —Amen.

The White-Robed Multitude

BY THE

Rev. JOHN KENNEDY, D.D., Dingwall.*

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?"—*Rev. vii. 13.*

The questions here asked by the elder, John could not answer, and no wonder, for it would be with difficulty he would recognise—indeed, he might utterly fail to recognise—these arrayed in white robes, and standing before the throne, as those he had known on earth. He

* Dr John Kennedy, justly described as the "prince of Highland preachers," was the son of the famous Rev. John Kennedy, Killearnan, who was held in the highest esteem by the Lord's people as a servant of Christ. Dr Kennedy was his fourth son, and was born in the Manse of Killearnan, 26th August, 1819. A volume of sermons was published in 1881, but, as Mr Auld, his biographer, says: "Mr Kennedy's published sermons, excellent as they are, do not convey an adequate idea of his preaching. They were written in the cool retirement of his study when he was in delicate health, and were often penned on a sick bed. They, therefore, although exhibiting in the main his way of treating his subject, fall behind what was his wont in the pulpit, especially when fronting a large congregation and all the powers of his mind raised to fullest activity." The above sermon was preached in Pulteneytown Free Church, Wick, on the Monday of the autumn Communion (30th November, 1862), and was taken down by a hearer. It was first published in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, viii., 405.

knew them in their temptation—it may be, in their sin; and, above all, in their great tribulation. No wonder then that his recognition failed, and the answering of the questions was difficult. Let us notice:—

I. Whence came these redeemed ones?

II. How came they hither?

III. Whither are they brought? To what home, and how are they occupied? On this latter point, I remark seven particulars:—(1) As to position, they are before the Throne; (2) As to occupation, they are serving; (3) They are enjoying the presence of Him who sitteth upon the Throne; (4) They hunger and thirst no more; (5) They feel no heat nor light of the sun; (6) Jesus, the Lamb, leads them and feeds them as a shepherd; and (7) God wipes away all tears from their eyes.

I. In looking at the first main head, "Whence came they?" I remark that they came from the earth. They were of the race of Adam, and that race a fallen, sinful one. Not the whole of Adam's race are there; all are not forthcoming, nor ever will be; but many—very many—of them are, and will be, before the Throne, and those are from every land, and nation, and kindred, and people. Thanks be to God, there are many from our own land, from your county, your town, your congregation, and, it may be, your home and family. And if it be so, may you not ask yourself, "What if I am left behind?" They have got to that glorious home, that everlasting home before the Throne, and what if you are the only one to be left behind? Let me tell you there is but one way of getting there, by the strait gate and the narrow way. The fear of being left behind may

well be a serious one; it may well rob you of rest; sleep may be refused your eyes and slumber your eyelids. Better far it should be so than that you should stand at last and see the door shut, while others go in.

Though there was so much diversity on earth among these redeemed ones, they having come from every nation, and kindred, and people, yet in many particulars they were alike, and in none so much as this, the state in which they were first found by redeeming grace. In what condition were they when found? They were lying under the curse of God's law in guilt and misery, having to account for a broken covenant. They were lying at the grave's mouth, on the brink of hell, without one thought of doing ought to escape it, with not one moment they could say belonged to them between them and everlasting burnings. The Lord knew they deserved to be cast into the grave's devouring mouth, He knew they deserved to be plunged into these burnings. It was not because He could not be independent of these worms of the dust that He resolved to save them. It would not have cast the least shadow of a spot on His justice, mercy, or glory if He had left them to perish, but it pleased Him to save them; it pleased Him to raise the beggar from the dunghill and set him among the princes of His people.

Yes, He found them under the power of sin, entirely under its power. So completely was it their master that there was not the least possibility of a hope that they could be delivered, unless by the exercise of a power stronger, mightier than it, even the power of the Almighty. Besides, being under sin's power, they were covered with its vile leprosy; so covered all over, so full of corruption, that hell seemed the only fit place for

them. They had lost the image of God; it was entirely defaced. They were destitute of holiness, and had not the least desire after it. . . . . When their meetness for hell was complete, when they were on the very threshold of it, with, as it were, but the lifting of a foot between them and it, then saving grace reached them, then redeeming love saved them. When I say they were in sin's power, under God's wrath, under Satan's power, leprous, corrupt, and vile, I have not said enough; I have not said that they were willing also to remain so, not caring to be delivered. Not that they were willing to come under the punishment that their sin and vileness deserved, or that they were willing to be under the power of Satan as an executioner. They served him willingly, eagerly, as prince; they fancied themselves happy in their allegiance to Him as such; but his subjects fear much the wages that their firm allegiance gets them. And might not God have let them get the wages they had so justly earned, and might He not allow the sentence of death to be executed—that sentence they had so truly earned?

When the Lord at first approached them, as they were lying in the state I have described, I do not know, friends, but they thought He had come as an executioner and not as a deliverer, and that, when He came to rouse them up, it was but to cast them for ever from His presence. And, moreover, poor, befooled, silly ones as they were, they thought it safer and better to be left in peace on destruction's brink than to be wakened up to a realisation of their state, which peace would only have made them feel their fall into eternal misery all the more. Yes, they raised the sluggard's cry, and pleaded the sluggard's petition, "Yet a little more sleep, a little

more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep," and turned them again with their face to the precipice. But God's love would not thus be set aside, nor His power be thus defeated. The time of the fulfilling of the eternal purpose had arrived, the time of effectual calling had come. He saw them lying in their blood, and then His time was a time of love. Why was it so? Is that your question? Because all He was then and thereafter to do was done to the praise of the glory of His grace. I wish here to remark before passing on that the passage to hell along the course of this world is a smooth, pleasant voyage. The floating is easy. Many, the nearer they approach the end, the more they are assured of peace, and the more loudly they talk of safety. Such are drunk with the world's pleasures, never heeding warnings, that seem to them but a blast of rudeness, till at length the end is reached, and they leap into everlasting perdition.

II. We come now to the second division of our subject, "How came they hither?" What were the means the Lord employed in conducting them to their place before the Throne? As we previously saw, if any power could deliver them out of the state in which they were, it must be an Almighty power; and so it was. The Lord Jehovah stretched His hand from above, took them from below, and set them among the princes of His people. What mode did God take to accomplish His end?

1. I remark, they were washed in blood, the blood of the Lamb. None without this washing can stand in the New Jerusalem. The washing must be complete; they must part from all defilement; no spot or blemish must be found on them. Nothing unclean can go up on

that way of holiness, not only nothing that is unclean but nothing that can communicate defilement. This washing, to begin with, is the washing of regeneration. There may be many differences in experience, but in this respect the resemblance is complete; they are all regenerated by one and the same Spirit. This washing never needs to be done over again. It is a washing that is kept by the power of the Lord unpolluted through time, till the redeemed take their place in eternity. A seed of all holiness was planted in the sinner's heart when regeneration took place. Not the seed of one particular grace, but the seed of all graces. Not one member was regenerated, but all the members; not one faculty, but all the faculties. When this washing was accomplished, it left behind it, then, a germ of universal holiness. A germ, not the full-grown flower, but yet a seed that is destined to bring forth fruit unto life eternal. There is often much need of reviving the grace in the regenerate sinner's heart, but there is no need of the implantation of a new life. There is no possibility of destroying the life already implanted; it will be kept there in spite of Satan, sin, and the world.

2. After regeneration, I would speak of justification. The sinner is justified freely through grace, not on the ground of regeneration, but solely on the ground of Christ's finished work. The obedience and death of Christ is as much the groundwork of the one as of the other. It is because of this, and this alone, that Jehovah can without reflection on His justice be the just God and yet the justifier of the ungodly. The act of justification is as complete as it is free, and as sure as it is complete. It does not need to be revised or done over again, and it shall never be cancelled. It is the perfect

act of Him who is the Rock, whose work is perfect. . . . In this act of justification all sins are forgiven; not only those known and remembered by the sinner, not only those felt and seen by him, when standing self-condemned and guilty, but those that the Judge saw, as He alone seeth; all, all were blotted out. It must be so, friends, in justice to Christ's righteousness. The guilt of one idle thought, one vain word, as an infringement of God's law, will expose us to His wrath. Thus, if even a word or thought were left unpardoned, it would be, as it were, a reflection on Christ's finished work, as well as it would doom us to destruction. The believer's title to heaven is settled. There is no fear of its ever being shaken or his ever being deprived of it. God does not set sinners on the way and then leave them to themselves. He does not say, "I have given you a fair start; you must now make the rest of the way yourselves." No, the believer starts an heir of heaven, by virtue of a title God secures him, and he holds on his way by the help of the Lord, till he reaches the threshold of eternity and there presents the title-deed written and sealed in the blood of the Lamb.

3. I observe the work of sanctification. Sanctification differs from either regeneration or justification. It is a work, not an act. Justification is an act done in heaven; sanctification is a work performed on earth. There is danger of placing the one for the other. Many in idle fashion trace their hope of sanctification to Christ's righteousness, and would fain believe that they personally had little or nothing to do with the matter. Such is not the right way of looking at it. Sanctification is a divine work of the Holy Spirit in the soul, distinct

from Christ's finished work, and in connection with which the soul must be exercised. Others think—and alas! this class is large—that sanctification is something to be got at when the individual is a stranger to the corruptions of his heart and to the exceeding sinfulness of his sin. Fancying they have attained to regeneration and justification, and that these entitle them to sanctification, they think they can well afford to dispense with the Spirit, and can well afford to be indifferent to a life of holiness. Such, I much fear, are yet in the bond of iniquity. The work of the Spirit in sanctification is a work that must go on, not outside, but in the believer's heart. Others again dream of holiness only after death, and look upon sanctification as a thing quite unattainable in this life. But, friends, sanctification is a work that is to be completed at death. And if this is not the case, there is no hope of it after. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still, and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still.

Don't wonder, aged Christian, you who have wandered in the wilderness many a day and tried to serve the Lord these many years, don't wonder now, when you are drawing near death, when your journey cannot now be much longer, if you feel you have more need of holiness than ever, and you find yourself saying, "Surely I am not meet for heaven, I who am seeing so much of my own increasing defilement, and those sins and corruptions becoming more powerful; no prayer, no utterance of mine that is not steeped in this defilement. Ah, how unlikely it seems that ever I shall set foot in the New Jerusalem." Dear friend, look less at yourself and more at blessed Christ. Take the Lord at His word. He that hath begun the good work, will He give it up now, think

you? He will not leave thee at the end of thy journey; even when the last step is to be taken, when in the death throes you may feel the presence of the old man in all his entirety, yes, as strong as ever. But even in death the Lord is worth the trusting. You may depend upon it that trust will not be betrayed. He will be as good as His word. When you have passed through the valley, crossed the river and parted with the old man, nothing will appear more astonishing to you, not even the first great change of being made spiritually alive, than this wonderful parting with the old man for ever.

Again, I wish to remark that this washing we have already spoken of is a washing in the blood of the Lamb, Christ. It is only through the blood of His Son that God can extend His hand to sinners. It is only through the right of His blood that the Spirit can give them His everlasting blessings. It is a wondrous sight, that of the Spirit bringing the sinner into God's presence and claiming sanctification through the right of Christ's righteousness. Think of Jesus putting in His claim on behalf of His blood-bought ones! Think of Jehovah's response and of the settling and sealing the sinner's title. This is indeed a sight passing wonderful. All washing, all justifying, all sanctifying, is at the expense of the blood of the Lamb. Nought out or away from this precious blood—all things in it. All, from the first moment of effectual calling till the believer reaches heaven, is done at the cost of Jesus' blood.

It is well, friends, to understand the connection between a life of holiness and the cross of Christ. How sin can be subdued, how lust can be weakened, how a soul cleaving to the dust can become heavenly, panting after the Lord and the enjoyment of His service—all this

is only to be got at by dealing with the blood of the Lamb. If I knew more of the life and death of my blessed Saviour, and were I less a stranger to His precious blood, I would have less cause to complain of hardness and death. Just so much the more dealing I have with this blood, just so much the more will I experience of the blessedness of the man who enjoys sweet and uninterrupted communion with God. The truest believer, the most advanced Christian, can never afford to be independent of the blood of the Lamb. When the finishing stroke is given, when they are going down to the Jordan, never were they more dependent, and you may hear them saying with Paul the aged—"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

We have now come to another point of our subject, namely, to remark that these washed, justified, and sanctified ones are brought "out of great tribulation." Some may ask, "How can this be? We have known many go there out of great and manifold tribulations, out of much sorrow and suffering, out of the pains of martyrdom, but others have entered peacefully, having had a pleasant, and it may be, a speedy journey." It may be so, friend, but if we knew the story of each of these redeemed ones, and if we took the accumulated stories in the aggregate, we would see how very great was the tribulation they were brought out of. But again, it may be urged, "Have not some had scarcely a journey at all? Have they not just breathed, and then been carried hence?" Yes, that may be the case too; but, friend, did they not open their eyes upon a world of misery, blighted by sin, did they not draw one breath

in a polluted atmosphere? Were they not surrounded by a sea of troubles, exposed to the powers of hell and the fiery trial of Satan? In this sense they came out of great and manifold tribulation. The smallest of these troubles they passed through was great, contrasted with the joys and happiness of their present glorious home.

This question may suggest itself to many of you, and how often it has been a hard question to some of us, "Why does the Lord expose His children to so many sorrows and trials, and when they meet them on their way, why does He not give them wings *over* these troubles, or why does He not lead them *past* by a more peaceful path? He, who loved them so much as to give up His well-beloved Son to the death, and who washed them in the blood of the Lamb, one would think He would do otherwise." I cannot answer your questions, except in this way. I am quite sure that the path the Lord leads them by is the best, and another thing I am sure of is, that He will draw glory to Himself and good to them out of what appears to us a grievous affliction and a tedious delay. If it is my Father's will that He should be glorified in me in His particular way, dare I murmur? Far be such a thing from me!

I shall now point out four ways in which the Lord has an opportunity of manifesting His glory in His people's afflictions. He manifests His faithfulness, His power, His wisdom, and His tender mercies. (1) *His faithfulness.* How often when the Lord's people are bowed down with sorrow, assailed with many and great temptations, struck to the ground by heavy afflictions, when it seems they are surrounded on every side by a very sea of troubles, when their heart grows faint within them, and they are ready to be engulfed, when they cry,

"Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious? Is His mercy clean gone for ever?"—how often does He come mightily to their deliverance and give them cause to sing to the praise of His faithful word! And when, after all delays, trials, fears, and suspicions, how shines forth the glory of His faithfulness in their triumphal entry into glory! Then that dark cloud of trial and tribulation will appear but as a background to show off more clearly His glorified faithfulness. The promises of the Lord are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. The Word of the Lord endureth for ever. (2) The *power* of God will be glorified in the affliction of His people. Satan is the great enemy of the believer. All his powers and artifices are employed, and all the blandishments of the world are used by him for the accomplishment of the believer's destruction. The more Satan molests, the more he aims his fiery darts, the more numerous the hosts he calls into the field, the more is the power of God glorified in beating back and defeating him. Had the Lord always made the journey of His people a short one, Satan might say, "Had He left them longer here, I would have easily defeated them, but I got no opportunity of trying them." But Satan has not this to say. The Lord gives him a chance of doing his worst. He leaves them forty years in the wilderness. Satan, with all his hellish hosts, tries every plan, and puts forth his utmost strength, but all to no purpose; he is vanquished. And after all, God's power triumphs, and His Israel arrive at the promised land, singing "Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" (3) Again, God's *wisdom* is glorified in His people's afflictions. What has not the wisdom of the Lord to do in defeating iniquity and in giving a way of escape to His people from the wiles and

deceit of Satan? When the believer is oftentimes in darkness and cannot see the need or wisdom of a mysterious providence, yet in the time of his deliverance he comes to see that in all the intricacies of the wheels of the machine there is written, Glory to God in the highest and good will to Israel. . . . I must see Jehovah's glory to be the first and great end, and that the way He takes to accomplish this end is worthy of Himself. Seeing this, it is surely well my part to be contented and to bow meekly to His wisdom, saying no longer, "Why did He do this or that? Would it not have been better if He had taken such a way or such another?" (4) Lastly, I remark that the *tender mercies* of the Lord are glorified in the afflictions of His people. The flesh likes an easy way—no trouble, no sorrows, no wounds, no fears, it would have. But had God's way been such an easy one there would be no gracious relievings, no sweet sense of His power and love in deliverance, no precious drops of comfort in the flames. The Lord takes His children's hearts off the loved things of earth, and must have nothing coming in between Him and them. When they are crushed under affliction, there is more cause for entire dependence in Himself. Were it not for troubles, friends, we would have little knowledge of the tenderness of our Lord's loving kindness. It is those who are laden with sorrow, those with open wounds, faint hearts, moist eyes, to whom Jehovah has an opportunity of showing His tender mercies. It is they who know how to get draughts from the fountain of His love. It is a blessed tempest, dear, tried child of God, that tosses you into the bosom of Jehovah.

What good may also be got from tribulations in the way of coming to know ourselves a little better! The

heat of the furnace throws up the dross and corruption of our vile hearts. Hard though the heat be, scorching though the fire be, yet the Lord brings great things to thee out of it all. Some poor tried one here may be saying, "I have been in the furnace, yes, in a hot fire, but what good has it done me?" It has at least done thee this good: it has shown thee how much of dross and corruption and defilement there is still in thee, and don't say that is a small thing. . . . There are some of us, my friends, who would like now and then to get a little pleasure and sin out of the cisterns of this world, but God breaks them and leaves us no other resource but to go to Himself. Rest you assured you are greatly the better of the troubles that send you oftenest on errands to the throne of grace. All furnaces are good that shut up to blessed Christ. When your journey is over, believer, will not the home seem sweeter to you, when looking back upon all the dangers and griefs and fears you have passed through? I think it will.

Two vessels left the harbour together. One of them had a pleasant and speedy voyage. No storm assailed her not an hour of the voyage, but the sea was quiet, beautiful and calm. She entered the port in safety. The other, from the moment of setting out, was storm-tossed and in danger. The wind blew fiercely, the waves raged, the hurricane roared, the waters rose like mountains; she was almost engulfed. When at last she did reach the harbour, with shattered mast and tattered sail, and hardly got in—was "scarcely saved"—which think you of the crews felt their spirits happier, or the haven sweeter? Was it they who had a pleasant voyage and an easy entrance, or they who had endured terrific storms and been in fearful dangers and had been scarcely

saved? I think it would be the latter, friends. Their hearts would be fuller of thankfulness, and the repose to them would be sweeter. And just so will it be with those entering the haven above, vessels of mercy, brought "out of great tribulation."

III. I must confess I shrink from the third point—"Whither are they brought?" It is too much, even a glimpse of this glory, for flesh to bear, unless accompanied by unction from the Holy One, and unless spiritual eyesight is given. If we push aside the veil in an irreverent manner, and if the fleshly prevail over the spiritual in our view, we shall at last come to regard those most holy things, a glimpse of which we have here vouchsafed us, with utter indifference. With becoming awe and solemnity, let us approach and look at these *seven things* that are recorded in connection with those redeemed, justified, and sanctified ones.

1. They are "before the Throne." And is this the goal they have reached at last? They, who were lying in their guilt and misery on the brink of hell, they who suffered in the pangs of the new birth, they who passed through the wilderness fainting and weary, they who so lately trembled in the death throes on the threshold of eternity—has it come to this with them at last? Yes, it is even so. They are basking in the effulgence of the glory issuing from the Throne and Him who sitteth upon it. I know not how it is, friends, but we cannot tell anything of that glorified body they now wear, nor how it is that they are so strengthened as to be able to endure the showing forth of that glory, nor do we know the exercise of soul they experience, which prevents their being struck down before the majesty of Him who sitteth

on the Throne. All of us can know little of it, and all our talking is but poor babbling at the best. But this I venture to say, with John, "It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." What a wonder, we exclaim, that they were ever brought there. Yes, it is a marvellous thing, but it would be a greater wonder if they were *not* there. If we look first at the wonder on Mount Calvary, our surprise will be less at this latter wondrous manifestation of God's love. When I see the Son of God pouring out His blood on the Cross, and when I think of Jehovah's marvellous love in the gift of His Son, my wonder would be great indeed, if the love that gave such a Son to shed His blood would not bring those cleansed in that blood to Himself at last, even to a place before His Throne. The wonder on Mount Calvary is *the* wonder after all. Nowhere is the glory of Jehovah's love and justice combined more manifest than in the Cross; and where can the objects of this love get a more fitting place than that which they occupy before His Throne above? Kings are wont to show forth and exhibit the trophies of their power and skill. These arrayed in white robes are the trophies of Jehovah's power and the specimens of His skill. Where can they be shown best but in that glorious place He has given them? In them is manifested, as in nothing else, the glory of His love. The reflection of that glory is cast back again from them in songs of praise and thankfulness towards the Throne and Him that sitteth upon it and the Lamb.

2. The second thing we are told of them is, "They serve Him day and night in His temple." They serve

Him. Observe, they are not idle. There is rest, but no idleness in heaven. Idleness would be no rest to them. . . . I do not know, nor can any of us tell, what this temple is in which they serve God. We are told they are always there day and night. Not that there is any night in heaven; it means that they serve *continually*. Had they nothing to do but enjoy rest and repose they could not be happy. There are two classes of professors, apart from them, very common in the world. The first is the idle ones. They never do anything, either in the family, church, or congregation. They do no good either to themselves or others. Another class is the noisy professors. They are always bustling about doing something all day long, making a great noise, but it is all "before men." Their religion is entirely one-sided; there is no God side. They do much that men can see, but one hour of closet communion they are strangers to—they care not for it, and are perfectly indifferent to soul exercise. The serving of the redeemed is a joyous and cheerful service. O yes, when that glory from the throne shines upon them, and the love of God fills their hearts to overflowing, they long to respond to the manifestations of Jehovah's beauty, and desire to have an opportunity of letting out that love in serving Him day and night.

3. The third thing said of them is that "He that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among them." O wondrous disclosure, marvel of marvels! Even here in the wilderness He did not leave them fatherless. He vouchsafed to them oftentimes His reviving power, giving them sweet foretastes of the blessedness they now enjoy. There will be an intimacy in communion above that is unattainable here. We cannot venture far into

this holy communion. We cannot tell how it is that each one among that throng will enjoy the delight of His ravishing countenance, as if that one alone was there; nor can we tell how it is that at the same time as they are enjoying the presence of Jehovah, they are receiving in their filled souls wave upon wave of the precious assurance of His love. This is beyond the tongue of man to tell, or mind to conceive.

4. We observe of them, fourthly, that "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." There is hunger here; often craving, consuming hunger and panting thirst. Not that the carnal heart craves spirituality; but the cry of the new nature is ever after holiness; it has a never-sufficed desire for spiritual life. The body is no longer below in its weariness and weakness; corruptions no longer grieve. The fire of Satan's temptations is quenched; all defilement is removed. There was a void *here* ever to be filled up, a craving for something more, something better yet. But *there*, these washed, purified glorified souls are filled full of joy and peace and the love of God, though not to satiety. They are kept full, yet capacity remains. They are all vessels of mercy sailing in the ocean of Jehovah's love, yet not overwhelmed in its depths. There remains, after ages of sailing, an ocean unfathomable yet to be taken in. Yes, they are filled, kept full, yet ever filling. There is a great mystery, friends, in this fulness. They have enough; there is no painful longing, yet progression is made towards the infinite.

5. We are told that "neither shall sun light on them, nor any heat." No sun lights on them now with its painful scorching. No fierce trial nor bitter opposi-

tion of the world reaches them there. No; nor that which is more difficult still to bear, the unkindness and trouble they meet with from believers themselves, no trials, no afflictions, no grievous burdens now to bear! No heat now from Satan's temptations, no fiery trial, no heat from the Father's chastisements. Free from all trouble are they, nothing to annoy, nothing to discomfort. They have reached the land where "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

6. The sixth thing revealed to us is that "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters." He is known as the Lamb even there, the Lamb "as it had been slain," the Lamb of Mount Calvary. Yes; and you also will know Him as the Lamb on whose very head you laid your hand in your bitter confession of sin; the Lamb whose blood flowed to cleanse thee, whose chastisements got thee peace, whose stripes brought thee healing. You will not grudge Him His place of honour then, believer. You had a heart once in you that would have robbed Him of His glory and kept Him in the grave of Joseph. But *there* you will rejoice that His place is high in heaven, and it will fill you with happiness to see Him, the Lamb in the midst of the throne. Even in the Father's house He will feed and lead His flock. Many a day did He lead them in the wilderness, and the leading does not end when they enter the promised land. In the Father's house He is still the shepherd.

I could not bear the thougnt that Jesus was not there to lead me. If I thought such was the case, heaven would not be the same to me. When I stand at the gates of the New Jerusalem, and they are rolled back, and when the glory from within shines upon me

in all its glorious effulgence, I would be utterly bewildered, and sink abashed with awe before the majesty of the glory, and be driven out again by the flood of brilliant light issuing from the Throne and Him that sitteth upon it, if Jesus, He, in whom I have believed in on earth, was not there to meet me. But He *will* be there; Christ, my Saviour, whom I have loved and trusted in my journey thither. He will be there to meet me on the threshold. He will take me by the hand and conduct me to the Father's presence. He will give me strength to endure the manifestations of Jehovah's beauty, of His love, and of His glory.

He leads them to fountains of living waters, in order to open up to them the beauty of holiness and the exceeding great riches of the grace that brought them there. He leads them to fountains of Jehovah's love and feeds them with the pure fresh waters. He reveals to them day by day some new glory and divine excellency, and all this He does with a man's sympathy as well as a God's bounty. In Him is seen the wondrous union of perfect humanity with all the glorious excellency and beauteous holiness of divinity. In the wilderness He sometimes gave His people just as much food as kept them alive, just as much as kept them seeking more. But there, in the Father's house, He places before them all the resources of the Godhead, without stint or reserve. What better security could they have that these resources are theirs for use, and that these reservoirs will remain inexhaustible for ever, than that it is the Lamb, who is in the midst of the Throne, that leads them to these fountains, yea, that helps them there to drink! Ah! there is a holy mystery in the Lamb feeding and leading the redeemed in heaven; and,

friends, I think it is sweet to feel that I can't understand it, that its glorious height is above my comprehension. Ah, yes, they will admire and adore, and their souls will be filled with a sense of the beauty of holiness as seen in the Godhead. They will feel now, in an incomparable measure, how lovely and how ravishingly beautiful is the Lamb, Jesus, in the glory of His purity and love. There is no end to His beauty. He is the altogether lovely one, the chiefest among ten thousand.

7. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." This last word, how wonderful! God, the Lord Jehovah, He who sitteth upon the Throne, shall wipe away their tears. Surely, this is surpassing wondrous! Ah! there were tears through the journey. They came even to the gate, to the threshold, with moist eyes, but they were soon dried. God wiped them away—and for ever. They who had known sorrow all their life on earth, they who had bent under its weight, they who for many a long day had carried a faint heart within them, they who had reached the gates of the celestial city at last, ready to give up and footsore and weary, they are those whose tears God will wipe away, and who have left sorrow and suffering behind them forever. God the Father will take away all sorrow, grief, and care from His people's hearts, and all tears from their eyes. And as sure as He does this, He will place Himself, with all His infinite resources of happiness, love, and peace, between them and the possibility of any return of their sorrow and tears. And if He will do this, and if He has pledged His truth and love to them for the performance of it, what has He not done in order to complete and perfect the joy of the redeemed?

Now that we have come to the conclusion of our subject, and have seen the redeemed reach their eternal home, and have looked at those seven things we are told of them there, let each one of us ask ourselves the question, "Are we on our way to that place before the Throne? Will we be among that throng arrayed in white robes and washed in the blood of the Lamb? Can we lay claim to an interest in that precious blood, and have we had any dealings with it? Or are we living in guilt and misery on destruction's brink?" Whatever state you are in, friends, one thing I am certain of concerning you is, you are on your way to eternity, your journey thitherward has commenced. Is it to an eternity of happiness and peace, or to one of woe and misery, that you are hastening? There is a road leading to each, the broad and the narrow way. You have not much to choose between; either of these two roads you must take—yea, are taking.

Unconverted man, who art wandering on the broad road, you must *turn*. Set your face towards the strait gate and the narrow way. You must be born of God and united to Christ—sanctified by the Spirit—before you can venture to hope that that house and these joys we have been speaking of can be yours.

Let me now ask you, believer, you who profess to be such, "Is your salvation nearer than when you believed? Are you making progress Zionwards?" "Ah, that is a hard question," some person answers. "All the progress I make is but in finding out my unfitness for entering there. My progress seems only backward to the world, sin, and Satan. My progress is but to feel my utter need of finding Christ and of His becoming all and all in and for me." If there is as much life in you,

dear friend, as to feel death, if there is as much light as to see your darkness, as much desire after Christ as not to be able to breathe freely without Him, don't fear that He will leave that faint desire unsatisfied. Don't fear that Christ will fail to help you. No; poor, witless, strengthless creature that thou art, though thou art weak as smoking flax, He will not quench thee, He will make His great strength perfect in thy exceeding weakness.

I would entreat all unconverted ones to come to Christ to-day. "To-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts." Come to Him for life, for light, for healing. Come, that He may add your name to the list of His redeemed by power, those whom He has washed in His blood and clothed in the white, fair robes of His righteousness, and to whom He will give a place before His throne. Would it not be well, I ask you, would it not be well, to get this question settled? Let there be no more wavering, no more indecision. Come to the point at once. Tell me, would it not be well? "It would," you say, "but then, just think of what I am in my guilt and sin and defilement. How could I ever come with my impurity before the holiness of the Lord? How could I ever hope to appear before His throne but to be judged? No, no, it is too much for me to expect." Anything would be too much for thee in that sense, friend; a cup of cold water would be too much for thee on the ground of your own merits, one breath would be too much for thee. But looking to the merits of Christ's precious blood, nothing is too much for thee. Look out and away to this blood. What can it not cleanse? What can not the grace of God accomplish? What hard dead

heart, with all its desperate wickedness, can not the Spirit soften and quicken and renew? Will not the word of God prove good, think ye, and has He not said, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin"? Make, then, sinner, this blood thy ground work, thy strength, thy staff; and glory is not too much for thee to win. And fitness for that glory is not too much for the Spirit to accomplish.

I am not here to-day to tell you only that you are a sinner, vile, and helpless—an outcast. This is not all my message. That I leave to your conscience and the open Bible before you. But my chief message is to tell you of a way of escape, a way of cleansing through the shed blood of the Lamb. Do not plead your inability and your wickedness. That is but an excuse for delay. If you leave the question of your salvation unsettled, leave it just where it is, and this day, this hour, is carrying you nearer destruction, and but hastening your progress to the brink of hell. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Don't say then, "Ah, my guilt is so great, my sin so heinous, my corruption so strong, I am altogether so unclean, so leprous, that I am only fit for hell; I cannot move a step or think a thought aright." Sinner, the Lord bids me tell thee to-day that He has placed Christ within your reach in the gospel. Christ Jesus can take away thy guilt and the curse of the broken law from thee. If your sins are of a crimson dye they can be washed white in the blood of the Lamb. Your uncleanness and leprosy Christ is able to remove, and He can make you fair and beautiful, clothing thee with the pure white robes of His righteousness. He will give you a heart to love Him and strength to follow Him whithersoever He leadeth.

The Lord offers you this day Christ Jesus, His unspeakable gift. And see, Jesus stands with open arms outstretched to receive thee. Hear His blessed words, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." May the Lord help thee to come to Him in whom "the fatherless findeth mercy," who will guide thee and preserve thee here, and give thee a place with Himself at last—yea, even a place before His Throne.